



MIGUEL L. MARRENGULA

Addressing Socio-cultural Animation
as Community Based Social Work
with Street Children in Maputo,
Mozambique



ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The study addresses socio-cultural animation (SCA) as a social work approach in a Mozambican context by showing the way it can be applied in promoting street children's active participation for social change, on the development of an emancipator practice throughout consciousness and self awareness, and the promotion of child rights within street children groups and communities.

The central argument in this study is that the use of the SCA approach with street children, its philosophy and ethical concerns, enables democratic participation, where street children develop awareness and consciousness in order to reveal their competence in directing observations about their social settings, and in promoting their active engagement with other team members in decision making for social change.

Methodologically, the study was based on a SCA participatory action research project in the city of Maputo, Mozambique, during a six month period, from June to December 2009. Framed in a hermeneutic-humanist perspective, with a research team composed of 12 street children and 4 professionals (1 psychologist, 1 nurse, 1 street educator and 1 social worker), the study produced data on the basis of a qualitative research approach, through a combination of methods such as dialogical conversation, direct observation and active participation on daily activities. In this study SCA praxeology integrates theory and practice by *working with* street children rather than *working for* street children.

The study brings insights into the possibility of applying SCA participatory action research as a practical approach on social work practice, where research and practice come together in a reflexive perspective. Through the active participation of street children, the study promoted emancipation, self-confidence, self-awareness and revealed the street children's capabilities to take informed decisions that have produced changes in their lives, impacting on the social transformation of their community.

Key words: Socio-cultural animation, street children, active participation and social change.

Abbreviations

CCA- Child to Child Association

FAO- Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations

FDC- Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade [Foundation for Community Development, Mozambique]

FRELIMO- Frente de Libertação de Moçambique [Liberation Front of Mozambique]

IMF- International Monetary Fund

INE- Instituto Nacional de Estatística [National Institute of Statistics, Mozambique]

MISAU- Ministério de Saúde [Ministry of Health, Mozambique]

MOZAL- Mozambique Aluminium Company

RENAMO- Resistência Nacional de Moçambique [National Resistance of Mozambique]

UA- African Union

UK- United Kingdom

UN- United Nations

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNDP- United Nations Development Program

UNICEF- United Nations Children's Fund

USA- United States of America

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY | 12 |
| 1.1. STREET CHILDREN PHENOMENON | 13 |
| 1.2. SEARCHING FOR A DEFINITION | 15 |
| 1.3. GENDER DIFFERENCES | 19 |
| 1.4. AGE DIFFERENCES | 21 |
| 1.5. PUSH AND PULL FACTORS | 22 |
| 1.6. STREET CHILDREN AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON: SOME FIGURES | 23 |
| 1.7. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: MOZAMBIQUE IN BRIEF | 25 |
| 1.8. THE STREET CHILDREN PROBLEM AND THE RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY | 29 |
| 1.9. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES | 33 |
| 1.10. SUMMARY | 34 |
| CHAPTER 2 : COMMUNITY, CHILDHOOD AND ORIGINS OF STREET CHILDREN | 36 |
| 2.1. INTRODUCTION | 36 |
| 2.2. COMMUNITY AS A CONCEPT | 37 |
| 2.3. CHILDHOOD AS COMMUNITY ISSUE IN A CONTEXT OF STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN MOZAMBIQUE | 43 |
| 2.4. THE MEANING OF 'CHILD' IN MOZAMBIQUE: SOME GENERAL ASPECTS | 45 |
| 2.5. THE ORIGINS OF THE STREET CHILDREN PHENOMENON FROM BRONFENBRENNER'S PERSPECTIVE | 48 |
| 2.5.1. <i>Socio-ecological theory and street children phenomena</i> | 49 |
| 2.5.2. <i>Street children community</i> | 57 |
| 2.6. ADDRESSING A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH ON STREET CHILDREN'S WELFARE | 59 |
| 2.7. SUMMARY | 62 |
| CHAPTER 3 : SOCIO-CULTURAL ANIMATION | 64 |
| 3.1. INTRODUCTION | 64 |
| 3.2. DEFINITIONS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ANIMATION | 64 |
| 3.3. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ANIMATION | 69 |
| 3.3.1. <i>The hot universe of animation</i> | 71 |
| 3.3.2. <i>The cold universe of animation</i> | 72 |
| 3.4. ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SCA | 72 |
| 3.5. THE THEORY OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ANIMATION | 75 |
| 3.6. SCA PRAXEOLOGY AS RESEARCH APPROACH | 78 |
| CHAPTER 4 : SCA AS PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH | 84 |
| 4.1. INTRODUCTION | 84 |
| 4.2. ACTION RESEARCH: ORIGINS AND DEFINITIONS | 86 |
| 4.2.1. <i>Origins of action research</i> | 86 |
| 4.2.2. <i>Definitions of action research</i> | 87 |
| 4.3. SCA AS PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH | 88 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 4.4. GENERAL STEPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCA AS PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH | 95 |
| 4.4.1. <i>Phase 1: The critical analysis of the real world and actuality</i> | 96 |
| 4.4.2. <i>Phase 2: The hermeneutic reading and understanding of that analysis of reality and the creation of a utopia.</i> | 97 |
| 4.4.3. <i>Phase 3: The search for practical tools along the slow path for a better tomorrow and a better future</i> | 99 |
| 4.5. SCA PRAXEOLGY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH | 101 |
| CHAPTER 5 : ANALYTICAL PROCEEDURES OF THE FIELD WORK | 107 |
| 5.1. AN EYE ON THE METHODS USED | 107 |
| 5.2. DATA PRODUCTION AND ANALYSIS PROCESSES | 108 |
| 5.3. THE SELECTION OF WORKING TEAM MEMBERS | 110 |
| 5.4. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES | 111 |
| 5.5. ETHICAL CONCERNS | 113 |
| 5.5.1. <i>Ethical concerns from an institutional and political perspective</i> | 115 |
| 5.5.2. <i>Ethical concerns concerning the street children and their families</i> | 116 |
| 5.5.3. <i>Research competence matters</i> | 117 |
| CHAPTER 6 : RESEARCH FINDINGS- PROMOTING SOCIAL CHANGES THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION | 119 |
| 6.1. INTRODUCTION | 119 |
| 6.2. THE CONTEXT OF THE FIELDWORK | 120 |
| 6.2.1. <i>Stage I: Critical analysis of social reality</i> | 120 |
| 6.2.1.1. The city of Maputo | 120 |
| 6.2.1.2. CCA in brief | 122 |
| 6.2.1.3. Why the CCA? | 124 |
| 6.3. PRACTICAL WORK WITH THE CCA STAFF | 125 |
| 6.3.1. <i>Stage II: Research team selection and planning</i> | 125 |
| 6.3.1.1. Selecting the research team from the CCA staff | 126 |
| 6.3.1.2. Misunderstandings and challenges | 129 |
| 6.3.2. <i>Moving forward: defining responsibilities and planning activities</i> | 133 |
| 6.4. THE STREET CHILDREN'S COMMUNITIES AND ITS REALITIES | 137 |
| 6.4.1. <i>Stage III: Trip to street children's community and selection of the street children's working team</i> | 137 |
| 6.4.2. <i>Identifying and locating street children communities</i> | 139 |
| 6.4.2.1. Preparing for the street | 139 |
| 6.4.2.2. The identification and location process: building empathy and mutual understanding | 142 |
| 6.4.2.3. Back to the critical reading of social reality: The case of Malanga and Assembleia-Ford Zones | 147 |
| 6.5. BETWEEN DREAMS AND HOPES: THE POSSIBILITIES AND IMPOSSIBILITIES OF STREET CHILDREN'S DREAMS | 151 |
| 6.5.1. <i>Stage IV: Hermeneutic reading of street children's realistic utopias</i> | 151 |
| 6.5.1.1. The possibilities and impossibilities: hunting for practical solutions and establishing a plan | 155 |
| 6.5.1.2. Logistic matters | 160 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 6.6. FROM STREET TO HOME: A STORY OF SUCCESS! | 163 |
| 6.6.1. <i>Stage V: Practical tools on the slow path for the social reintegration processes - The intervention act</i> | 163 |
| 6.6.2. <i>Reintegration in Boane</i> | 164 |
| 6.6.2.1. Family contacts and reintegration | 164 |
| 6.6.2.2. Paito's background history | 165 |
| 6.6.2.3. Alex's background history | 165 |
| 6.6.2.4. Facing reality together | 166 |
| 6.6.3. <i>Reintegration in Bobole, Marracuene</i> | 170 |
| 6.6.3.1. Family contact and reintegration process and Jaimito's background history | 170 |
| 6.6.3.2. Jaimito at home | 171 |
| 6.6.4. <i>Reintegration in Manhica</i> | 174 |
| 6.6.4.1. Family contact, reintegration process and Kito's background history | 174 |
| 6.6.4.2. Meeting the family | 175 |
| 6.6.5. <i>Reintegration in Zavala</i> | 177 |
| 6.6.5.1. Family contact and reintegration process and Sebastião's background history | 177 |
| 6.6.5.2. Between tears and fears | 178 |
| 6.6.6. <i>Reintegration in Beira</i> | 181 |
| 6.6.6.1. Family contact and reintegration process and Pinto's background history | 181 |
| 6.6.6.2. The sad reunion | 182 |
| 6.7. LOCAL BOARDS AND COMMUNITY EFFORTS | 187 |
| 6.7.1. <i>Stage VI: Follow-up processes: evaluation and celebration acts</i> | 187 |
| 6.7.1.1. Evaluation | 187 |
| 6.7.1.2. The local children's rights board in Boane and follow-up | 188 |
| 6.7.2. <i>Closing and celebrating the intervention</i> | 190 |
| 6.8. SUMMARY | 191 |
| CHAPTER 7 : PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN STREET CHILDREN'S LIVES | 195 |
| 7.1. INTRODUCTION | 195 |
| 7.2. PARTICIPATION OF STREET CHILDREN AS A PROCESS | 196 |
| 7.3. SOCIAL CHANGES THROUGH PARTICIPATION | 207 |
| 7.4. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF CHANGES | 214 |
| 7.5. SUMMARY | 216 |
| CHAPTER 8 : PUSH AND PULL FACTORS IN RELATION TO LOCAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS | 218 |
| 8.1. INTRODUCTION | 218 |
| 8.2. THE PUSH AND PULL FACTORS OF STREET CHILDREN | 218 |
| 8.3. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND LOCAL UNDERSTANDINGS | 222 |
| 8.4. SUMMARY | 229 |
| CHAPTER 9 : ADDRESSING SCA PRAXEOLOGY AS SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE | 231 |
| 9.1. STREET CHILDREN PHENOMENA AS A COMPLEX, MULTIDIMENSIONAL, CULTURALLY EMBEDDED AND GLOBAL PROBLEM | 231 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 9.2. THE ISSUE OF CHILDHOOD AND COMMUNITY STRUCTURAL CHANGES AND ITS IMPACTS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS | 234 |
| 9.3. SCA PRAXEOLOGY AS A COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE | 236 |
| 9.4. THE ISSUE OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS | 241 |
| 9.5. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND BARRIERS | 242 |
| 9.6. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN MOZAMBIQUE AND OTHER CONTEXTS - SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES | 245 |
| REFERENCES | 250 |
| APPENDIXES | 270 |

Maps

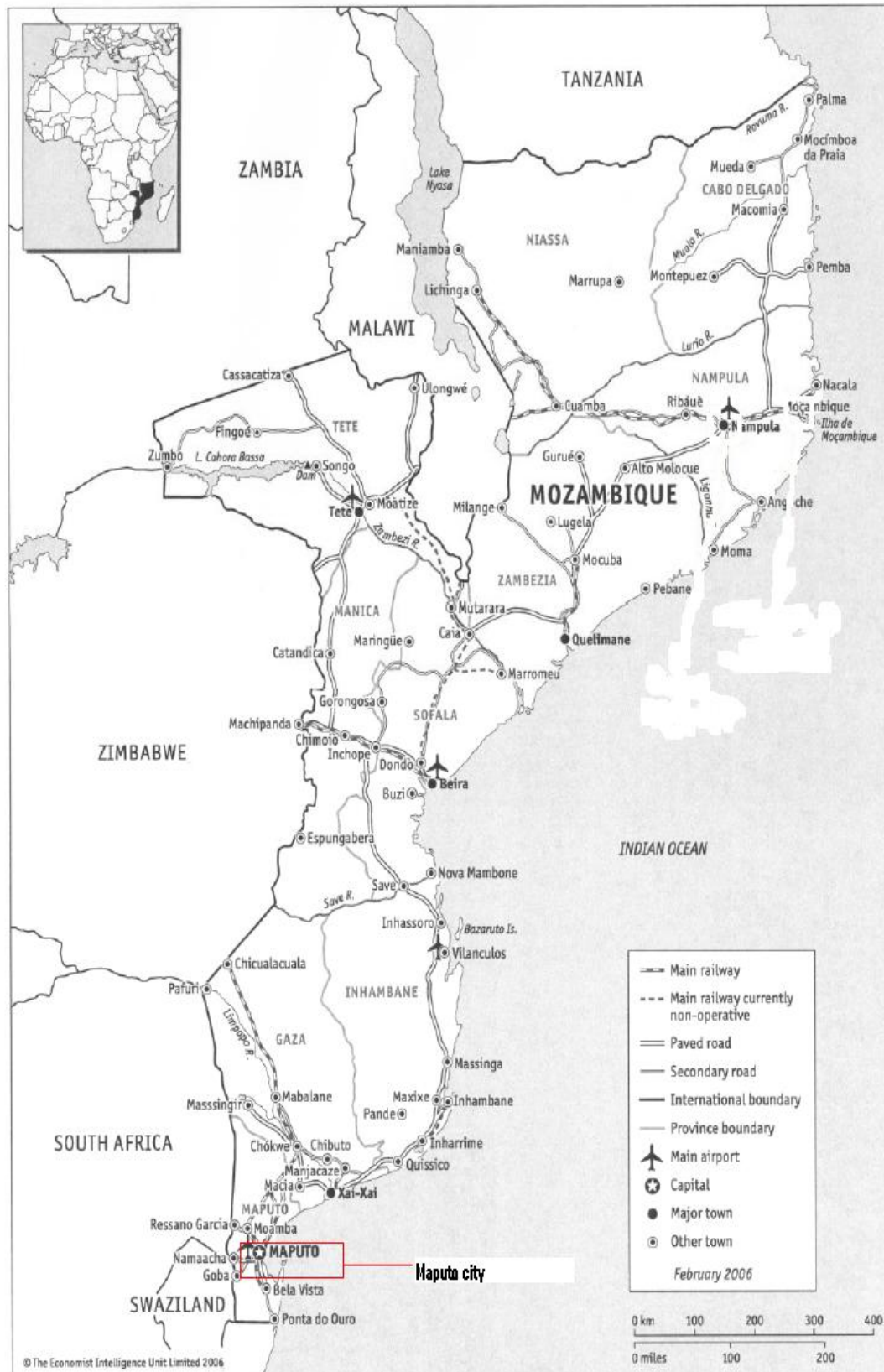
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|--|-----|
| MAP 1. MAP OF MOZAMBIQUE AND RESEARCH SITE | 11 |
| MAP 2. THE CITY OF MAPUTO AND FIELDWORK SITE | 121 |
| MAP 3. LOCATING CCA IN MAPUTO | 122 |
| MAP 4. DISTRICTS 1, 2 AND 3 WHERE THE STUDY TOOK PLACE | 145 |
| MAP 5. STREET CHILDREN ZONES INTEGRATED IN THE RESEARCH WORK | 149 |

Tables

| | |
|---|-----|
| TABLE 1. CATEGORIZATION OF STREET CHILDREN | 17 |
| TABLE 2. DATA PRODUCTION AND ANALYSIS | 108 |
| TABLE 3. DATA ANALYSIS CATEGORIES | 113 |
| TABLE 4. FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT | 132 |
| TABLE 5. ACTIVITY PLAN WITH CCA STAFF MEMBERS | 135 |
| TABLE 6. DISTRIBUTION OF STREET CHILDREN BY COMMUNITIES | 146 |
| TABLE 7. THE STREET CHILDREN'S RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS | 154 |
| TABLE 8. ORIGINS OF STREET CHILDREN RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS | 160 |
| TABLE 9. HOME VISITS AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION PLAN | 162 |

Figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| FIGURE 1. THE BROFENBRENNER ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK | 56 |
| FIGURE 2. STREET CHILDREN WITHIN BROFENBRENNER'S APPROACH | 58 |
| FIGURE 3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RESEARCH TEAM | 136 |
| FIGURE 4. SOCIAL REINTEGRATION SCHEME | 164 |



Map 1. Map of Mozambique and research site

Chapter 1 : Introduction to the study

*We can never obtain peace in the
outer world until we make peace
with ourselves. Dalai Lama*

The meaning of the term “street children” has been a topic of enduring debates among decision-makers, politicians and academicians for many years. The phenomenon of street children continues to be an integral feature of the urban landscape in many parts of the world, and at present, along with much debate, policies and laws for children’s rights and child protection are being planned worldwide.

In most developing countries, these policies and laws are a shadowy presence that fills the empty background of street children’s daily lives, while they do odd jobs, scavenge for food, beg and steal. In some regions of the world, the phenomenon of street children is the normal everyday life of citizens of the present generation, so that it becomes part of the landscape; in others, this is a new phenomenon challenging the social environment in most urban areas.

The increasing tendency of the street children phenomenon is found among highly vulnerable families and communities, many struggling to come to terms with economic liberalization and growing inequality, maintained by global systems of oppression and exploitation. This phenomenon can also be traced to a lack of communication in families and the weakening of social networks that provide social support and care at a local level. This situation, which is associated with high levels of poverty and social inequality, can be considered as a potential cause for the increasing and alarming number of street children, signaling the dire need for social development and poverty reduction policies to improve the situation in the community at large, and to prevent more young people from becoming marginalized.

Despite being very visible to the naked eye, street children are not an easy population to be studied, understood and described as such. Today it is very difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the exact number of street children in the world. One of the reasons for this is related to the lack of a clear and common definition of what should be or who should be considered a street child.

The present study is designed to address the need for more reflections on the issue of street children and ultimately to aim at proposing alternative intervention approaches. This study tries to make a contribution for a better understanding of the phenomena of street children and addresses socio-cultural animation as a social work approach in dealing with children, such as street children, living in difficult situations.

The rationale of this chapter is fourfold: firstly, to reflect on the phenomenon of street children, current research trends on the topic, the different definitions of the concept “street children”, and the gender and age differentiations, which are by no means the central element of the entire study; secondly, to provide information about the study context from a geographical, social, cultural and economic point of view, in this case Mozambique; thirdly, to reflect on the research problem and the relevance of this study; and, finally, to present the objectives of the study, questions and primary assumptions.

1.1. Street children phenomenon

The street children phenomenon is not a recent issue worldwide. It has attracted attention of humanitarian aid agencies and governments for more than thirty years. The term was first used in 1951 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to refer to vagrant children following World War II (Panter-Brick 2001), and it was ardently discussed in the wake of the International Year of the Child (1979), resulting in the formation of the Inter NGO Program on street children and street youth in 1982 (Lalor 1999).

In 1986, the United Nations Children’s Fund’s (UNICEF) executive board approved priority measures on behalf of “children in special difficult circumstances”, and special emphasis was placed on street children and on “developing strategies...which would defend their rights, avoid their exploitation, and respond to their personal, family and community needs” (Taçon 1991 in Lalor 1999; Panter-Brick 2001).

During the last decade, there has been much scientific discussion on the issue of the street children phenomenon and children’s rights among academics from many different fields. Researchers such as Ennew (1994), Aptekar (1988), Swart (1990), Lucchini

(1993a; 1996), UNICEF (2001), De Moura (2002), Veale & Doná (2003), Mulinge (2010), Lam & Cheng (2008), Kombarakaran (2003), Kerfoot et al. (2007), amongst others, have been puzzled by the issue, focusing their concern on how to develop strategies for child protection, social reintegration and social well-being among street children and on how to reduce the push and pull factors of the phenomena locally and globally.

According to Lalor (1999), most academic work on street children originates in Latin America with authors such as Aptekar (1988), Connolly (1990), Felsman (1981), Glauser (1990), Green (1997), Lucchini (1993a; 1993b; 1994a; 1994b), and Valverde & Lusk (1989), including the work by Rizzini & Lusk (1995). Lalor (ibid) mentions some writings on a more global level which includes authors like Agnelli (1986), Boyden (1991) and Ennew (1994). In contrast to Latin America, relatively little is known about street children in Africa and even much less about the situation in Mozambique.

However, in recent years, some studies on street children phenomena in Africa have been emerging with authors like Matchinda (1998) in Cameroon, Veale & Doná (2003) in Rwanda, Young (2002) in Uganda, Kudrati et al. (2008) and Plummer et al. (2007) in Sudan, Tudorié-Gemou (2005), Tsotetsi (1998) and Maphatane (1994) in South Africa, Hatloy & Huser (2005) in Accra, Lalor (1999) in Ethiopia, Ouma (2004) in Kenya, Kopoka (2000) in Tanzania, just to mention some, and the same can be said about the South Asian countries, where the increasing phenomena of street children has led to academic interest among researchers such as Mathur, Rathore & Mathur (2009), Kombarakaran (2003) in India, Lam & Cheng (2008) in China, Ali et al (2004) and Towe et al. (2009) in Pakistan, Gross et al. (1996) in Jakarta, and Hong & Ohno (2005) in Vietnam, among others.

In many cases, the phenomenon of street children is commonly seen as an issue of developing countries and, as Stephenson (2003), quoted by the Council of Baltic Sea States (2003), says, the emphasis is particularly on those countries in Latin America and South[ern] Africa. Ennew (1994) agrees with this statement when he mentions that most writings about children and young people living on urban street areas of developing countries state that the children are disorganized, living in illegal misery, and are described as psychologically and irretrievably damaged, unable to form relationships, and are definitely destined to be emotional, social and economic failures as adults.

These ideas, which tend to portray developing countries as the only ones with the problem of street children, are not true. Many studies demonstrate the existence of street children in the so-called developed world, having as examples Aptekar (2000) on street children in Finland, Farrow et al. (1992), Ringwalt et al. (1998) and Libbertoff (1976) on street children in the USA, Antoniades & Tarasuk (1998) on street children in Canada and, in general, Embalch (1993) on street children in Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia. These studies include the Council of Baltic Sea States Committee's (2003) report, which mentions the existence of street children in Germany, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, and so on.

1.2. Searching for a definition

With regard to the definition of street children, studies developed by Onta (1996), Ress & Wik-Thorsell (1996), Hautaniemi (1999), Tudorie-Gemó (2005), Ouma (2004), Scanlon, Tomkins, Lynch & Scanlon (1998), Schurink (1993), De Moura (2002), among others, have reflected on the concept of street children in different social contexts, but there is still no specific concept that can be considered suitable for all contexts and realities. This lack of a common definition of street children is related to the fact that street children have multidimensional and heterogeneous aspects, requesting in this case for a context-based analysis.

Nevertheless, researchers and organizations working internationally, whose interests lie with issues related to child protection and children's rights, have been addressing different definitions about what they mean with the term "street children". These definitions are made on the basis of some categorization as to their origin, characteristics, social networks, and so on.

The first attempt to provide a consensual definition of street children was made by the Inter-NGO Program for Street Children and Street Youth in 1983 where they defined street children as those children for whom the street more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults (Ennew 1994).

Regarding this definition, Panter-Brick (2001) argues that there are several terms that could lead to confusion such as the meaning given to 'family', 'protection,' or

‘responsible adults’ (Hecht 1998 in Panter-Brick 2001), and the meaning of ‘home’, ‘child’ and childhood’, which are terms with different conceptualizations in different cultures. For example, for Panter-Brick (ibid), being homeless is rendered as *desamparado* (without protection or the comfort of other people) in Latin America [and also in most Portuguese-speaking countries], *furosha* (floating) in Japan, and *khate* (rag-picker) in Nepal. Desjarlais (1996) evokes concepts of disaffiliation, transience, and marginal work rather than notions of residential access or type of abode (Desjarlais 1996 in Panter-Brick 2001).

Due to these discrepancies, many other attempts to categorize street children took place in order to acknowledge their heterogeneous circumstances and lifestyle, but most of them have also proved problematic (Panter-Brick 2001). For example, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) categorized street children as ‘*children of the street*’, as those who have a family accessible to them but have made the streets their home; ‘*children on the street*’ as those children who are workers but who return at night to their family settings; ‘*abandoned*’ as those children who have no home at all, and ‘at high risk’ as those who are likely to be drawn into street-life (Panter-Brick 2001; Onta 1996; Richter 1988; Kombarakaran 2003; Lalor 1999; Tudorié-Ghemo 2005; Tsotetsi 1998 and Lucchini 1997).

Other categories of street children were proposed by Tudorié-Ghemo (2005), quoting Richter (1988), Keen (1988) and Rehman cited by Tsotetsi (1998), presenting five categories of street children as follows: *throw-away children*, *run-away children*, *slum children*, *dump children* and *bush children*.

The combination of all these categorizations and labelling leads to a process of stigmatization of who are or who are not street children, and in practice they do not contribute for a better understanding among social workers, researchers, psychologists, and many experts in social service provision about who street children really are. In practice, as (Panter-Brick 2001) demonstrates, it is still very difficult to uphold in practice a general definition of street children, given the fluidity of children’s movements on and off the streets, and a lack of correspondence in the ways children themselves relate their experiences.

Many labels such as children ‘without family contact’ and ‘abandoned’ lacked precision and were mostly taken for granted and applied without a deep reflection on

their contextual meaning. This position is widely shared by Maphatane (1994), Tudorié-Ghemo (2005), Council of the Baltic Sea States (2003), Ennew (1994), and Aptekar (1988), who argue that the meaning of street children is not clear and that it needs more reflection to clarify it. The following table (Table 1) summarizes the most common categories of street children used worldwide.

Table 1. Categorization of street children

| Category | Characteristics | Observations |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| “Children ON the Streets” | Children, who contribute to their family’s support and survival, work on city streets while continuing to maintain strong links with their family environment, including sleeping at home. | UNICEF (1998), Onta (1996) and Richter (1988) |
| “Children OF the Streets” | Children, who have left home, live on the streets day and night. They maintain limited or non-existent contact with their family environment and often struggle to survive entirely on their own. | UNICEF (1998), Onta (1996) and Richter (1988) |
| “Children at Risk” | This definition covers a wide range of young people exposed to risk as a result of their way of life: victims of exploitation in the family environment, inmates from penitentiary institutions, survivors of human or natural catastrophe, HIV/AIDS, and so on. | UNICEF (1998) |
| Dump children | Children who live on rubbish dumps and scavenge for food daily; | Rehman quoted by Tsotetsi (1998), Keen (1988) |
| Bush children | Children who live in the bush and are often from homeless families | Rehman quoted by Tsotetsi (1998), Keen (1988) |
| Throw-away | Children completely abandoned and neglected by their parents or caregivers; they do not have any contact with their biological families and depend totally on themselves and their ‘street family’ for any kind of physical and psychological protection. | Rehman quoted by Tsotetsi (1998) |
| Run-away | Children who have run away from their homes due to deprivation, physical or sexual abuse, alcohol abuse and general peer pressure to join the ‘perceived’ freedom that street life seems to offer. | Rehman quoted by Tsotetsi (1998) |
| Slum children | Children belonging to ‘slum families’ that live in areas of squalor. Children whose mothers are usually domestic workers and spend long hours away from their children, who are then left to look after themselves, resulting in them roaming the streets during the day. | Rehman quoted by Tsotetsi (1998) |
| Abandoned children | Children who have been abandoned by their relatives; this may have happened when they were just born or even when they were grown up. | Rehman quoted by Tsotetsi (1998) |
| Homeless children | Children who are born and live on the street together with their families. | Rehman quoted by Tsotetsi (1998) |

Other authors use different dimensions to identify street children. For example, Lucchini (1997) extends the definition into seven dimensions of street children, namely dynamic behaviour (types of activities they do), self-identification (how street children identify themselves), motivation *vis-à-vis* street life (what influences them to be on the street and live on the street), and gender-structured differential access to street environments (how gender determines the possibilities of becoming street children), including spatial (space where they live, where they come from and which they share when living on the street), temporal (time living on the street and the age of the children), and social elements (economic background, political situation, cultural issues and so on).

The diversity of conceptual frames shows that a precise definition of street children cannot be clearly demarcated. In this study, the definition of street children comes from their *lifestyle*¹, having as a principal basis their unique characteristic of street life, which means that street children are those for whom the street, more than their family, has become their real and unique home.

Street children in this study are children without a home, in particular, those who do not have a parent or any adult as their caregiver. Street children, for this purpose, live in abandoned buildings, containers, old automobiles, parks, or on the street itself and do not have any minimal contact with their relatives and formal institutions for care (Marrengula 2007).

In this study, the term street children means *any girl or boy below 18² years old and for whom the street has become his or her habitual home, source of life, whose*

¹ The concept of 'lifestyle' is based on the idea that people generally exhibit a recognizable pattern of behaviour in their everyday lives. For example, regular routines of work, leisure, and social life, food, dress code, etc. Lifestyle is a product of some combination of choice, chance, and resources determined by the socio-cultural environment. In fact, Shields (1992) and other sociologists have suggested that lifestyles are essentially artifacts or reflections of culture, individual choice being a less important factor than societal determinants. *Lifestyles are viewed as groupings of commodity consumption involving shared symbolic codes of stylized behaviour, adornment, and taste* (Shields 1992).

In the case of street children I mean the bundle of behaviours that make sense to both (street peers and members of society in general) and oneself (the street child her/himself) in a given time and place, including social relations, consumption, entertainment, and dress including means of forging a sense of self and to create cultural symbols that resonate with personal identity and group identity (the community to which s/he belongs on the street and at home).

² The age of 18 years is based on general use of the definition of the child in the convention on the rights of the child. However, as we will see in Chapter 2, this age limit has cultural limitations. Nevertheless, for this research practice I use this age limit as an analytical tool in order to be able to delimitate my working group.

family is composed by other peers on the street and who does not have any protection from an adult or any formal institution.

This definition does not include children who live on the street with their relatives, such as the case of entire homeless families, who are in a real sense, street families too, and those children who mainly work on the street, spending some days there and then returning to their family environment.

1.3. Gender differences

Different studies show a higher incidence of boys on streets than girls, worldwide (Aptekar 1994; Veale & Donà 2003). The reasons for such differences are related to diverse socio-cultural factors.

According to Aptekar (1988) and Felsman (1981) quoted by Lalor (1999), in Columbia, the street child population is 75 percent male and 25 percent female. In Zimbabwe, 95 percent of 520 children interviewed were boys, as were 84 percent in Angola, 76 percent in Ethiopia, 70 percent in Zambia, and nearly 100 percent in Sudan.

The same situation has been found in South Africa where street children were typically black males (Le Roux 1996; Muchini & Nyandiya-Bundy 1991; Moberly 1999; Veale, Aderfrsew & Lalor 1993; Mambwe 1997; Veale 1996 in Veale & Donà 2003).

Aderinto (2000), Beyene & Berhane (1997), Black & Farrington (1997) and Wright et al. (1993) quoted by Ali et al. (2004) state that girls form just 10–15 percent of street children worldwide.

These statistics should not be taken for granted; they have large implications in policy design and intervention strategies in practice, bringing in this case the need for these statistics to be questioned. For example, why are there more boys than girls living on the streets? What are the motivations behind these phenomena? Does this mean that girls have better life conditions than boys or it is the opposite?

In fact, the real data of the incidence of girls on the streets may be hidden by the nature of their appearance on the streets and their real everyday activities, which tends to be less visible than the number of street boys' activities.

For example, street girls may only be visible during night times, on sex-related work activities, working with street gangs or they can be found selling goods of diverse character all over the cities or even working in conjunction with a street family, while street boys, on the other hand, typically engage in more visible activities such as car washing, shoe shining, begging and peddling (Lalor 1999; Rizzini & Lusk 1995).

This can also be related to the cultural aspects on the meanings of childhood, the male and female child and on socio-cultural representations and expectations of girls and boys in different contexts. For example, Aptekar (1997) says that, in Kenya, boys are socialized to become independent at a young age while girls are encouraged to stay at home. Muchini & Nyandiya-Bundy (1991), quoted by Veale & Donà (2003), for instance, state that the main reason is related to the fact that families refrain from sending girls to the street because they fear sexual abuse.

This position is shared by Lalor (1999), who, in a study of 23 families of Ethiopian street children, found that parents were concerned and worried about the dangers associated with working on the street. Similar findings were reported by Chatterjee (1992) in a study with Indian parents, who stated that “employment for girls outside the home often ceases around the time of puberty to conform to socio-religious practices: parents are extremely reluctant to expose their daughters to male attention” (Chatterjee 1992 in Lalor 1999).

Another evidence of this is portrayed by Veale & Donà (2003) when they mention that street children in Sudan were almost exclusively male due to the influence of Muslim culture in Khartoum, which made it inappropriate for girls to wander unaccompanied on the streets.

In the same way, there are fewer street girls than street boys due to the position the female child holds in rural family life. Acharya (1982), quoted by Lalor (1999), explains that in Nepal the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) analyzed the contribution of women and children to both household and agricultural activities. Females were found to work more than males in all age groups, and it was the family's dependence on girls' labour at home and in the fields which was responsible for lower rates of school enrolment among females. Consequently, this might also have prevented them from working on the streets. In urban areas too, girls are more valuable

to households due to their functions of looking after children and helping with chores, thereby freeing the mother to work outside the home.

According to Connolly (1990: 134–135), in Latin America “girls are more needed within the family, as they are expected to perform household chores and care for younger siblings”.

Another factor associated with the cultural aspect of the low incidence of street girls worldwide is the permanent protection given to girls in the community where, in times of overwhelming family crisis, girls were more likely than boys to be placed in children’s homes by family members, whereas boys were more likely to survive as they could or move onto the street (Moberly 1999 quoted by Veale & Donà 2003).

During the war times in Mozambique, Nordstrom (1997) in Veale & Donà (2003) noted that girls and boys were subjected to the same conditions that forced children to live on the street, such as witnessing their entire village being destroyed, yet street children were almost always boys. According to Veale & Donà (ibid), girls hypothetically were more easily forced into prostitution and child labour; Nordstrom (1997) commented that “while the *presence* of homeless boys on the street is a constant reminder of the tragedy of war, the *absence* of the girls is another”.

These positions demonstrate that there is a greater tendency for boys to become street children due to diverse factors and cultural patterns. Some of the most important elements to take into account when reflecting on these statistics from the socio-cultural point of view are the meanings given to the term ‘child’ and ‘childhood’. These meanings are socially and culturally different in terms of gender, where a female child is seen in different ways from a male child. These social expectations are deeply influenced by structural changes in a community’s economies and cultural practices, as I will further discuss in Chapter 2 on childhood and the community.

1.4. Age differences

The age profile of street children varies from country to country. However, the majority of street children worldwide are aged between 10 and 14 years (Lalor 1999). About this issue, Aptekar (1997) states that the mean age of 76 Kenyan street children was 12.6

years and Veale et al. (1993), quoted by Veale & Donà (2003), argues that, of 1,000 street children in Ethiopia, the average age of initiation to the street was 11 years.

In other African countries, the age profile has been found to be older. For example, in Zimbabwe, Muchini & Nyandiya-Bundy (1991) in Veale & Donà (2003) found that of 520 Zimbabwean street children, about 60 percent were 14 years or older. In Mauritania, the average age of street children was 14.2 years (Marguerat & Poitou 1994 in Veale & Donà. 2003) while 60 percent of street boys in Sudan were aged 13 years or over.

The same results are mentioned by Ali et al. (2004), Aderinto (2000), Lalor (1999), Terre des hommes (2002) and Aptekar (1988), who demonstrate that in Nigeria, Columbia, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and Brazil the street children's age range varies from 9 to 12 years.

When analyzing the age differences of street children between developing countries and developed countries, Ali et al (2004) noted that the ages of street children in developing countries differ significantly from those in developed countries: 11–16 years of age in developing countries in opposition to older than 16 years of age in developed countries.

By looking at these statistics, it is possible to notice that the age ranks and cultural settings of a child and childhood should be taken into account when defining action programmes on issues related to street children on a locally based aspect, as different realities affect street children worldwide. This means that we cannot construct general settings for boys and girls living on the streets based simply on their age ranks.

1.5. Push and pull factors

Push factors³ and pull factors⁴ for street life are by definition the main elements that influence the child to decide to take up street life. However these factors vary from context to context and they should not be seen in general terms.

³ Understood as all external elements to the child, which force the child to abandon the family environment and decide to live on the streets. These factors may be related to the family, community and societal relationship that s/he has been in contact with.

⁴ Seen as all those elements which attract the child to street life.

According to Price (1989) quoted by Ali et al. (2004), causes for being on the street differ in developed countries, where the majority of street children left home to reside or work on the street to escape dysfunctional families, physical battery, neglect, or sexual abuse or out of a desire for freedom, and not because of socio-economic problems.

On the other hand, in Latin America, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, authors (such as Rizzini & Lusk 1995; Aderinto 2000; Scanlon et al. 1998; Lalor 1999) state that the main reason for children abandoning home is related to structural problems of extreme poverty. Associated with these factors, research from India, Latin America and South Africa report physical abuse at home as a major cause for children to become street children (Nigam 1994; Scanlon et al. 1998; Krueger et al. 1997 quoted by Ali et al. 2004).

Ali et al. (2004) and Tudorié-Gemó (2005) state that children in South Africa are subjected to poverty, abuse and neglect; similar findings are demonstrated by studies in Brazil (de Moura 2002; Rizzini & Lusk 1995), in Columbia (Aptekar 1988), in Ethiopia (Lalor 1999), in Nigeria (Aderinto 2000), and in China (Lam & Cheng 2008).

However, it is important to keep in mind that, in the same way, due to the multidimensionality and heterogeneous character of street children, there is little possibility for generalization. There are many complex aspects to be taken into account for a child to decide to abandon the family settings and live on the streets. From the context of Mozambique, issues concerning the push and pull factors of street children are later discussed in Chapter 8 on more specific grounds.

1.6. Street children as a global phenomenon: some figures

Due to the complexity and the multidimensional aspect of the concept of street children, there are difficulties in reporting the exact number and specific locations of street children. This is also related to the high level of discrepancy concerning the political and philosophical definitions of street children worldwide. Moreover, as a result of a lack of consensus on the definition amongst social workers, health workers and other professionals, many street children are overlooked, thereby contributing to an underestimation of the real figures and to an incomplete understanding of the phenomena.

In many cases, statistics have also been compounded by the fact that, in some contexts, whole families live out in public spaces where living and begging on the streets is viewed as a normal fact of everyday life or as the only alternative for survival due to a situation of extreme poverty. Another factor that contributes to differences on the number of street children can be associated with the political, social and cultural perspectives of professionals and researchers where, depending on their perspectives, figures can be either over or under-estimated.

Some of these discrepancies can be seen in reports published by professionals and researchers. Some examples are as follows: statistics reported in 1983 estimated that there were approximately 80-150 million children around the world who make an income from street life (Schurink 1993). Another report in 1986 by the United Nations (UN) estimated that there were between 30-170 million street children worldwide (Ress & Wik-Thorsell 1996; Scanlon, Tomkins, Lynch & Scanlon 1998). In 1990, four years later, Connolly (1990) reported that there were more than 20 million street children in Brazil. More than two decades ago, UNICEF estimated that approximately 100 million children and adolescents were growing up on the streets of large cities (UNICEF 1989 in Ayuku et al. 2003).

According to De Moura (2002), 50 million of the Brazilian population are children aged between 5 and 19 years of age. This would imply that the estimates by the previous authors suggest that almost half of the street children population in the world is Brazilian, which is rather unlikely. Similar data is presented by Ali et al. (2004) when they mention that current UNICEF estimates put the number of street youth at 100 million: 40 million in Latin America, 30 million in Asia, 10 million in Africa and the remaining 20 million in Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia (Embalch 1993). The argument that street children are phenomena only to be found in developing countries is hereby denied.

Ali et al. (2004) mention that all industrialized countries have their share of street children worldwide. The number of street children in the USA (Ringwalt, Greene, Robertson, & McPheeters 1998 in Ali et al. *ibid*) may be as high as 2 million.

Figures presented by Ali et al. (2004) quoting Boss, Edwards, & Pitman (1995) show evidence from the Australian government, which estimated the number in Australia to be 25,000, while Van der Ploeg & Scholte (1997) in Ali et al. (*ibid*) state

that in Germany and the Netherlands, the estimates were 40,000 and 7,000, respectively, Canada estimates street youth to number approximately 150,000 while the United Kingdom (UK) estimate is around 77,000 (Safe on the Street Research Team 1999 in Ali et al. *ibid*).

The 2007 statistics regarding the data on children in Mozambique estimates that there are between 3,500 and 4,500 Mozambican children living on the streets, with numbers growing due to the impact of HIV/AIDS; this is associated with the poverty situation of about 70 percent of the national population and many other factors. The same source estimates that the homeless population in Mozambique is about 7,112 people, including street children (INE 2008).

These figures show clearly that the street children phenomenon is an issue of global concern, which should be seen from a global perspective in order to be able to take informed action.

1.7. Context of the study: Mozambique in brief

Mozambique is a country located in Sub-Saharan Africa. It borders the Indian Ocean on the east, Tanzania on the north, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Africa on the west, and South Africa on the south⁵. The population is 20,854,100 (INE 2008). Maputo is the capital and the largest city of Mozambique and has a population of about 1,191,613 (*ibid*). About 34.5 percent of the population lives in urban areas and 24.6 percent of the country is covered by forests.

There are 2,470 km of coastline and 0.3 percent of the land area is devoted to permanent crops. The median age is 17.4 years, the birth rate is 38.0 per 1,000 people, 44.3 percent of the population is under 15 years old, 22.3 percent is between 25 and 44, and 2.9 percent are 65 years and older (MISAU 2007). The population growth rate is 1.8 percent (UNDP estimate for 2005-2015). Portuguese is the official language, spoken by about 42.6 percent of the population.

⁵ See Map 1

Mozambique was a Portuguese colony for about 500 years. In 1962 the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) was formed, which ran the liberation war that followed for more than a decade, and which succeeded in overthrowing the Portuguese regime in 1975. After independence, FRELIMO established a state on a socialist and communist foundation that was to last for a decade and a half. Meanwhile, more than 95 percent of the colonial settlers left the country in a sudden mass exodus, throwing the economy into crisis.

FRELIMO, with a very limited technical capacity, tried to overcome the crisis by nationalizing most private companies, banks and commercial farms, especially those abandoned by the departing settlers, and then by attempting to manage the economy through a centralized planning system. At its third congress in 1977, FRELIMO formally adopted Marxism-Leninism as its guiding ideology. In the Cold War context of the time, these moves were supplemented by a close alliance with the USSR and other Eastern bloc countries, which had assisted FRELIMO's liberation war (Hanlon 1997; Abrahamsson & Nilson 1994; Castel-Branco 1995; Hanlon 1991).

The defeat of colonialism and the emergence of a nationalist government committed to socialism and allied to the USSR prompted a hostile response from the white minority regime in power in neighbouring Rhodesia and later from South Africa. They exploited the internal discontent within Mozambique, fuelled by political repression, economic decline, ethnic rivalries and misguided attempts at social engineering, by sponsoring an armed revolt spearheaded by the National Resistance of Mozambique (RENAMO). This plunged Mozambique into a brutal and destructive civil war that continued for 16 years, forcing more than a quarter of the country's population to flee abroad as refugees and killing more than 1 million people. By the early 1990s FRELIMO had abandoned its Marxist ideology and announced a change-over to a market economy, whereby state enterprises would be privatized and multi-party elections would be held under the pressure of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Hanlon 1997).

In October 1992 a formal peace agreement was arranged with the coordination and negotiation of the Italian Catholic movement 'Comunitá di Sant'Egídio', and a successful United Nations' (UN) monitored disarmament and demobilization campaign was established. However, at this time, there was almost nothing left of the

country. Since the signing of the peace accords, Mozambique has moved forward in a quest to transform military conflict into political competition. In 1994 the country held its first multi-party free elections. FRELIMO won, but only by a narrow margin, with RENAMO securing almost half the votes. A free-market economy has replaced the old socialist programmes, and foreign aid has been “generous”.

But, despite all its evident regeneration, Mozambique remains one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 172 out of 177 countries, as the U.N. Human Development Index 2007-2008 (USAID 2009) mentions. Many of its modest successes have been negated by drought, famine and, most recently, by floods directly influenced by global warming and climate change.

From the economic point of view, since its independence in 1975, up to recent years, Mozambique is one of the world's poorest countries. Post-colonial mismanagement and a brutal civil war from 1977-1992 exacerbated the situation. In 1987 the government embarked on a series of macro-economic reforms designed to stabilize the economy. These steps, combined with donor assistance and political stability since the multi-party elections in 1994, have led to improvements in the country's growth rate. Inflation was reduced to single digits during the late 1990s although it returned to double digits in 2000-2003. Fiscal reforms, including the introduction of a value-added tax and reform of the customs service, have improved the government's revenue collection abilities.

In spite of these gains, Mozambique remains dependent upon foreign assistance for much of its annual budget, where about 40 percent of government budget is foreign aid, and the majority of the population remains below the poverty line (using less than 1 USD per day).

Subsistence agriculture continues to employ the vast majority of the country's labour force. A substantial trade imbalance persists, although the opening of the Mozambique Aluminium Smelting company (MOZAL), the country's largest foreign investment project to date, has increased export earnings.

Poverty in Mozambique is a combined result of colonial heritage, the shocks (professional exodus and natural disasters) that accompanied independence, the failure of centralized planning and the destruction and upheavals brought by the civil war.

The restoration of peace created suitable conditions for the return of refugees, the revival of peasant agriculture and other economic activities, the rehabilitation of infrastructure, the restoration of basic public services and other positive developments that would start to improve the well-being of the people. Thus, while the Family Aggregates Survey (IAF) in 2002/03 (INE 2004) revealed that poverty is still widespread, it showed that there has been quite a rapid improvement since a similar survey in 1996-97, when 69.4 percent of the population was in absolute poverty. Between 1996/97 and 2002/03 the poverty headcount declined by 16 percent in rural areas and 10.5 percent in urban areas. Also, the depth of poverty fell by 9 percent, meaning that not only has the proportion of the poor declined, but also that the poor have become relatively less poor (INE 2004).

Illiteracy and low levels of schooling, poor economic and social infrastructure, widespread endemic diseases and the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS are among the main factors limiting the available opportunities for the poor to improve their situation. The average rate of adult illiteracy was 54 percent in 2002/03, with the highest provincial rates in Cabo Delgado (68 percent), Nampula (65 percent) and Zambézia (61 percent). Nonetheless, these rates too represent an improvement compared with 1997, when the national average illiteracy rate was 60.5 percent. There is also a wide rural-urban difference in illiteracy, with the rural illiteracy rates more than twice as high as the urban rates (65.7 and 30.3 respectively in 2002/03). Gender differences are also very wide, with 68.2 percent of illiterate women compared to 36.7 percent of men in 2003 (INE 2004).

Access to health services has also improved, with consultations per inhabitant more than doubling between 1993 and 1999, and there have been significant improvements in immunization rates and births attended by trained health personnel (World Bank 2003). Yet, despite substantial reductions in mortality rates, the under-five mortality rate is still one of the highest in the world (158 per 1,000 live births) and life expectancy at birth is only 44 years (UNICEF 2004).

On the whole, Mozambique is a culturally rich country, with a multi-ethnic landscape and diverse values among local citizens. Associated with this cultural richness is the unspoilt environment, where the biodiversity of the nature attracts tourists from different backgrounds. It is in this context of poverty, the high rates of

HIV/AIDS infection and mortality, the profound impact of natural disasters and economic imbalances that this study takes place.

1.8. The street children problem and the relevance of this study

My interest on street children has deep roots in my own personal life, and it constitutes an important part of my biography. From the fall of 1992 to the beginning of 1993, I experienced myself a situation of street lifestyle in the city of Maputo, since I found myself in a homeless situation as many orphan and poor children used to be in most parts of suburban areas of Maputo city and of many cities of the world.

It is in this context that I personally faced the effects of structural economic change, where education should be paid for, hospitals (access to medicine), food, clothes and family were only meant for those who could afford them. I and many other children living on the street had to work hard to get food, to go to school, and at the same time to cope with the social environment in which we were integrated while living on the street.

Situations of overwhelming discrimination, social exclusion and stereotypes were our everyday reality. I lived in a situation where teachers at school prevented me from entering some classes because I was smelly, dirty, and had lots of wounds on my legs whereby I could 'contaminate' the classroom; children in public places used to call us derogatory names for no reason whatsoever, in a context where people treated us as if we had chosen the life we were living.

These are realities that street children face in today's Mozambique as well, eighteen years after the civil war ended, a context in which many families still find themselves attached to city life after being displaced by the war and a country still with high rates of unemployment.

In 2002, when I worked as a primary school teacher I started to be involved in a teachers' project to provide support for children with difficulties in accessing school, and this movement led to the creation of a small association which still acts today on the street children issue and of which I am an active member.

The need to understand why there are so many street children in Maputo, even though the war has ended and the country seems to be stable, led me to address my master's thesis on historical patterns of child welfare in Mozambique from 1975 to 2006, focusing on the welfare of street children.

Findings from that study demonstrated the existence of various factors influencing the phenomenon of street children in Maputo, from the family level to structural matters, and from policy to economic weaknesses and so on.

While completing my studies for my master's degree I came across some socio-pedagogical studies which attracted me due to its humanist aspect. I quickly decided to address a study on a methodological aspect, having in mind the use of socio-cultural animation as a frame that could provide practical tools in working with street children and other people in difficult situations from an emancipatory perspective. However, this decision was influenced by my previous education in sociology at Eduardo Mondlane University, more specifically from the Sociology of Inequalities and the writings of Octavio Ianni (1987, 1991, 1992 and 1996), Ralph Darendorph (1990), Samir Amin (1996, 1997), Wole Soyinka, Zigmung Bauman (1991), Francis Fukuyama (1992), among others, who have introduced me to a critical sociological approach.

Besides these personal motivations, I noticed during my studies for my master's degree that in Mozambique as well as in many countries, there are different organizations implementing interventions and social programmes in order to provide social support and resolve the problem of street children, but still, the situation is uncontrollable. While preventive interventions are essential, those children already facing the hardships of street life need immediate opportunities for human development via special protection programs.

In the case of Mozambique, these opportunities should be reinforced by specific action plans and child protection tools for intervention. There are, of course, several child protection regulations and programmes being developed by the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MMAS) on a nationwide perspective⁶, but most of these programmes and projects, to my point of view, lack follow-up and professional

⁶ Some of these plans and programmes are: National Child Strategy (2008), National Plan for the Children (2006-2010); National Plan for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (2006-2010) and National Plan for Social Action (2006-2010)

intervention, besides the fact that they are designed on the general basis of the convention on children's rights, without a localized realization of the problem. This is also associated with the fact that these policies and action plans have a macro-level basis in child protection.

Due to the fact that these programmes are less integrated from a local perspective, the majority of Mozambican citizens, who are poor and marginalized, are left outside the social security⁷ and welfare system due to the poverty of many families and to the high rate of orphaned children victims of HIV/AIDS, which is associated with a persistent deficiency in social services planning and the low economic status of the country. The situation is made even worse when there is an insufficiency of policies or decision-making practices and correct programmes for social development on a contextual basis.

Among those who are not taken into account in official programmes are the street children, who are one of the major losses of human capital, since they are potential criminals: they are people who, as a matter of fact, will live a life of dependency. As Ouma (2004) mentions, "when they (street children) reach adulthood they will become the major social destabilization factor and a definite cause of political instability".

Non-governmental Organizations (NGO), such as UNICEF, Save the Children, Foundation for the Development of the Community in Mozambique (FDC), Meninos de Moçambique (MDM), Rede da Criança, Masana, Ingrid Chawner Maputo, Arco Iris, among others, have been implementing social reintegration programmes, child welfare activities, and policies to influence the government in Mozambique, in order to provide basic support for street children and many other marginalized groups of society, such as homeless families, orphaned child victims of HIV, and poor widowed women, by providing health care and basic education in accordance with people's individual circumstances.

According to the national NGO network organization (LINK 2008), there are about 90 NGOs working on children's rights issues in Mozambique and about 40 of these organizations focus on street children's issues in Maputo. Even with so many

⁷ Lately, the Mozambican government has established new criteria to integrate the poorest groups of society into the social security system.

organizations addressing the issue of children's rights and street children's reintegration programmes, the phenomenon of street children persists and seems to be increasing rapidly. The question is why does the situation persist? Is there anything wrong with these programmes? What should be done?

My personal experience, through direct observation and contact with some organizations, made me come to the conclusion that most of the street children's programmes and projects do not look at the contextual and cultural backgrounds. Their interest is more linked to the need to take the street children back home, to provide them with basic food and support for a while, and that it is all. On other occasions, street children are collected from the street and "locked" up in rehabilitation centres, without questioning their motivation to be on the street, and their interest in staying or not staying in a rehabilitation centre. This aspect has also been noted by Salokangas (2010) and Salo (2009) in their master's thesis about street children in Maputo.

The fact that most of these programmes lack street children's participation and their communities in the decision-making and planning of their lives is, in my opinion, a possible reason why they have failed to achieve their objectives. In this case, the active participation of street children can provide better results in social support programmes.

As we can understand from previous sections of this study, there are many studies, articles and reports acknowledging the existence of street children, and the need to take a step ahead in order to solve the problem, proposing different types of intervention concerning child protection and child welfare. However, very few studies have taken place in a Mozambican context addressing the issue of street children and local participation, and very little is known about the application of socio-cultural animation (SCA) as an approach of social work practice at the community level.

Another important fact is that social work training in Mozambique is still in its infancy; social work training has been provided by two private universities⁸ since 2007, and plans are now being made to have such training in public universities at the beginning of 2011. This means that social work as a scientific and practical field is new, and SCA is unknown as a perspective of social work practice, although its features are part of the lifestyle of many African communities such as Mozambican communities.

⁸ Catholic University of Mozambique and Jean Piaget University of Mozambique

Based on this spectrum, this study is guided by the following research questions: How does one address the active participation of street children in solving their problems? What are the main factors influencing the phenomena of street children? How does the perception of children's rights at a local level influence the phenomena of street children?

Overall, the research problem of this study is synthesized as a question: *“To what extent can socio-cultural animation praxeology be addressed as social work practice with street children in Mozambique”?*

My expectations with this study are that it will set a new stage in social work practice in Mozambique, when it comes to the provision of child protection and child welfare in different intervention programmes arranged by NGOs and by government organizations. On the basis of the present situation, and by forecasting the future needs of the street children and other disadvantaged social groups, I hope that decisions will be taken so that basic social services can reach all members of society and that these interventions will take local people's participation into account.

The findings of the study may promote reflection on issues related to community development and social work practices, and I hope that they will provide decision-makers with help and guidance in integrating street children and other disadvantaged groups as well, in providing basic social services and access to these people's basic human rights, as far as it is the main concern of all human beings.

The main interest of this study is to address the phenomenon of street children at a local and global level, as an issue that should be a concern of all citizens in the world. I also recommend the need for a more context-based approach when addressing the phenomena in different parts of the world.

1.9. Research objectives

The general objective of this study is to address socio-cultural animation praxeology as a social work approach with street children in Mozambique.

As specific objectives, the study focuses on a) portraying the application of socio-cultural animation in promoting the active participation of street children for social

change in their lives; b) developing an emancipatory social work practice through the development of consciousness and self-awareness of street children; c) promoting children's rights within street children's groups and communities and among their communities of origin; and d) providing substantive information on street children's needs, traits, strengths, defences and conflicts in order to bring about the awareness of local communities and the world concerning the phenomenon.

1.10. Summary

The objective of this chapter was to make a brief introduction to the study by presenting the different concepts of street children, the situation of street children worldwide, the context and the objectives of the study.

Unclear definitions of the concept of street children are seen in this chapter as the main factor influencing the data and the content of information about street children and the definition of action programmes in order to reduce the incidence.

The definition of street children is contextual and is influenced by many different factors, with different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. The concept of street children should not be generalized; it needs to be approached in a multidimensional perspective in order to address a clear understanding of the phenomena.

There is a need to address the issue of street children as a global problem, as in almost all over the world it is possible to find patterns of street children even though they differ in terms of push and pull factors, their lifestyles and social problems. The study is framed in a context of extreme poverty, high rates of HIV/AIDS infection and mortality, profound impacts of natural disasters and economic imbalances, in which Mozambique is submerged.

The research problem of this study focuses on verifying the applicability of SCA praxeology as a social work approach in working with people in difficult situations such as street children, turning this task into the main objective of the study, which is to address SCA praxeology as a community-based social work practice approach.

The following chapter deals with issues of children and childhood in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. It addresses the phenomenon of street children's origins from Brofenbrenner's perspective.

Chapter 2 : Community, childhood and origins of street children

*I am not a liberator. Liberators
do not exist. The people liberate
themselves. Che Guevara*

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on providing a general introduction to the study, in which the concept of street children was discussed. A brief presentation of the context of the study, its geographical location, history, and some economic and political trends were given. I also made a short description of my main motivation in addressing this study and its general objectives.

The present chapter aims at reflecting on the origins of street children, having Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory as the main umbrella and trampoline tool with which to address socio-cultural animation (SCA) as a social work practice at the community level. However, before going through this reflection, it is important to have a brief discussion on aspects of the 'child' and 'childhood' in African community child welfare, where I briefly discuss the meanings given to the term 'child' and its implications for child policies and child welfare strategies in a very broad perspective. In order to make these aspects clear, I first present in brief the concept of a community in general, as a way to shed light on the meanings I give to concepts such as community work and street children community, which is later used on a practical level.

To do this, the chapter is divided into 7 sections as follows: section 1 has a short discussion of "community" as a concept; section 2 is related to issues of childhood in the context of Mozambique, with the main goal of clarifying what is meant by childhood in this context and in many Sub-Saharan African countries; section 3 discusses the concept of child in a context of structural changes through which Mozambique has been going and the influence of these changes on policy design at a local level; section 4 is about the origins of street children, having Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory as its analytical frame; section 5 presents the concept of street children community having its foundations in the concepts of the community, street children and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory; section 6 recalls the need for community-based

work as an alternative method in order to adopt a more comprehensive and locally-based approach in situations concerning street children; as a closing section, section 7 makes a short summary of the chapter as a whole.

2.2. Community as a concept

Communities have been an object of attention for a long time. They have been seen as the best context to address the needs of people living in disadvantaged circumstances (Halpern 1995; Miller 1981). In recent years there have been several approaches to community-based social work, aiming at introducing different perspectives of practice, such as action research, group focused work, and home based work, community work and so on. These approaches place an emphasis on child and family welfare.

The reason for this tendency is related to various factors such as the belief in communities as places where common needs and problems come together and as the best spot to be addressed (Chaskin 1998). This belief is supported by the fact that most approaches to child welfare and family well-being are insufficiently comprehensive to provide clear insights for intervention (Levitan, Mangum & Pines 1989; Schorr 1988).

Adding to this is the increase in the interest in developing social research on community approaches with children, family and social development and the interest in addressing communities as the best places to study social problems at a local level (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Sampson, Morenoff & Gannon-Rowly 2002; Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal 2001; Gittel & Vidal 1998; Warren 2001).

These approaches have heightened the need for a deeper reflection on, and the redefinition of, community-based social work practice approaches. Socio-cultural animation (SCA) as a social work practice is one of these approaches of community work.

However, very little attention has been given to SCA as a social work approach in most community development studies. Mostly, these studies focused their approaches to community work as “any kind of helping activity or service” or as “community care” and even as work carried out in an “enterprise under non-statutory auspices; and if it involves volunteers” (Jones 1977, 5–9). In many other cases, community work is also

associated with community development as an instrument for community 'empowerment'. These approaches have emphasized the notion of "empowerment", "aid", and "top/down relations", as opposed to the philosophical idea of community work from the perspective of SCA, which gives priority to the participation of local members of the community and to emancipator community work instead of empowerment, where the decisions are taken from a horizontal standpoint, promoting a full and true participation in all stages.

The term 'community' is complex and is understood differently among academics. Henderson & Thomas (1981), for instance, argue that the term has many moral and ideological forces behind it and that it has been given a plethora of definitions. Just to illustrate this proposition, Hillery (1955) found about 94 different definitions of the term "community" by different Anglo-Saxon sociologists, and Williams (1976) found 80 different definitions of the same term.

Mostly, the concept of 'community' is associated with a group of people living near each other or is used to refer to people who share similar activities (hobbies, work, sport, sexual orientation, internet relations, and so on) or to a group of people with similar beliefs/faiths and practices and is highlighted by a very strong cohesion in their relations (religion, traditional practices, cultural backgrounds, and so on) no matter where they are situated.

However, the term 'community' is not a recent one; it has been present in the analysis and studies of sociologists from the classic writers and pioneers of this discipline, such as Ferdinand Tönnies, Emile Durkheim, and Marx Weber, among others.

The German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) discussed the concept of community in opposition to the concept of society. His most famous and important document is *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, published in 1887. In this work, Tönnies combines the term Gemeinschaft with the social world of pre-industrial, agrarian, rural settlements where strong family ties, traditional authority, and collective sentiments are prominent. Generally, the direct translation of the term Gemeinschaft is 'community'. He also sees Gesellschaft as the opposite of Gemeinschaft. For him, the term 'Gesellschaft' refers to a context of more impersonal social relations mediated by

financial instruments such as money and based on more formal contracts within a framework of rationalism and individual interests.

According to Tönnies, quoted by Harris (2001), the growth of commercial activities, the beginning and the development of industrialization associated with capitalist philosophy are the main elements that affected rural and traditional life and gave birth to the so-called *Gesellschaft*. He presents his arguments on this matter, saying that “all kinds of social co-existence that are familiar, comfortable, and exclusive are to be understood as belonging to *Gemeinschaft*. *Gesellschaft* means life in the public sphere, in the outside world. In *Gemeinschaft* we are united from the moment of our birth with our own folk for better or worse. We go out into *Gesellschaft* as if into a foreign land. A young man is warned about mixing with bad society: but ‘bad community’ makes no sense in our language” (Tönnies 1887 in Harris 2001, 18).

Ferdinand Tönnies understood the paradigm shift (rural to urban) as a process in which the urban destroys the rural. He argues that “community is old; society is new, both as an entity and as a term” and, quoting Blutschi, he states that “wherever urban culture flourishes, ‘society’ also appears as its indispensable medium. A country people know little of it” (Harris 2001, 19.).

In this perspective Tönnies sees the loss of the rural and village community in the face of industrial urbanism with lamentation and mourning by mentioning that “everyone who praises rural life has pointed to the fact that people there have a stronger and livelier sense of community. Community means genuine, enduring life together, whereas ‘society’ is a transient and superficial thing” (ibid.).

In the intersection of these ideas with those of Tönnies, the French classic sociologist Emile Durkheim (1893) recalls the need to consider that the community would be called a simple society, in which the predominant factor of cohesion would be mechanical solidarity in opposition to a complex society where organic solidarity prevails.

Durkheim (1858-1917) looked to the impact of urbanization on the community with mistrustful eyes. While discussing the role of the division of labour in changing the nature of social relations between individuals, Durkheim brings two important terms: organic solidarity and mechanic solidarity. By mechanical solidarity he means “the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average citizens of the same society

forms a determinate system which has its own life; one may call it the collective or common conscience. ...it is, by definition diffuse in every reach of society” (Durkheim 1960, 79).

According to the Brazilian sociologist Raquel Recuero (2002), Durkheim criticizes the vision of Tönnies for whom the community would have a character and its natural result, which is that of corruption in society. “According to Durkheim, society would have a less natural character than the community, because there are slight similarities in terms of attitude in small towns and large cities. Moreover, he says (eventually not fully opposed to Tönnies’ ideas of community and society, which is based on ideal types, not on empirical observation, as was the method of social research advocated by Durkheim) that neither *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft* possess characteristics that can be found only in a small social group” (Recuero 2002.).

In his reflections, Durkheim places much emphasis on legal codes and societal mechanisms for social control of crime and social deviance. For him, in mechanic solidarity, the legal code represses any activity that is against the common will or the “collective conscience”, while by contrast, “organic solidarity” due to the division of labour is a consequence of the emergence of capitalism and the growth of interdependency of people from different contexts and social ties, with different occupations and under the pressure of a modern industrial society (Durkheim 1960.).

On the other hand, Max Weber emphasizes the differentiation of social relations among community associations. Looking at his proposals, it can be considered that the community would tend to a Tönniesian prevalence for the type of community relations, whose contents would be “based on a subjective feeling of belonging that is mutual between the parties and upon which the action is referred to each other (...) already known as a type of society relation in Tönnies’ view, associations tend to be prevailing”, as they support “an agreement of interests rationally motivated...” (Quintaneiro 1995, 111).

According to Recuero (2002), in the opinion of Weber the concept of community has its grounds on the orientation of social action. For Weber, the community is based on any kind of emotional or traditional connection. Weber proposes a definition of community as “a social relationship in that the orientation of social action, the average

or the ideal type is based on a sense of solidarity: the result of emotional connections or traditional participants” (Weber 1987, 77 in Recuero 2002).

Despite some correlation between their thoughts, Tönnies had a vision of the community which was far more romanticized and idealized than Durkheim’s and Weber’s. But even considering these differences, in general it is possible to identify common elements in the classical view of the term, as the idea that the community would be an authentic way of life unrecoverable, typical of the first human aggregations, which belong to the past. The term is also associated with ideas and concepts such as tradition, custom, survival, and natural character (Tönnies); the main factor of cohesion in a community would be its mechanical solidarity, that is, individuals would be supportive because of their similarities (Durkheim); between people there tend to prevail community relations of emotional and affective type based on solidarity, and the result of emotional or traditional connections (Weber)⁹.

The mode of community life would be supplanted by the establishment and consolidation of modernity and a rationalization that would regulate all spheres of human coexistence (economic, political, and social). The changes which came through social relations, now developed in an urban environment rather than rural, would be part of an irreversible process. It must then seek the new foundations on which it could build a different concept of community, based on modern ideas. The geographic element gains a certain weight, since it is more likely to have common goals and to identify factors among those individuals who share the same physical environment (district, neighbourhood, city, and nation). This proximity would be the condition for establishing relations.

Martin Buber (1878/1965), concerning the new trends in the term ‘community’, argues that a “new community” should be based, among other things, “in relations issued by the free choice of the people and not of consanguineous links” (Buber 1987, 17). Going against the utilitarian order which already dominated the society of his time, he insists that the “community should be an end in itself and not an instrument to achieve other ends” (ibid, 25). While this means that community is the original lost

⁹ There are still many other features of psychological effects of the rural to urban shift in George Simmel (2002). “The Metropolis and Mental Life.”

paradise, for Buber it is a new paradise to be built, where there is a union of common land, labour, help and spirit.

Contemporary, new elements, beyond the territorial issue and sharing something in common, were added to the idea of community. Recuero (2002) lists some characteristics of a community: “the feeling of belonging, the territoriality, the permanence, the connection between the sense of community, character and corporate development of a common project, and the existence of their own forms of communication” (Recuero 2002).

However, Ander-Egg (2003, 25) defines community as “a group of all people who inhabit a defined geographic and delimited space, whose members have awareness of belonging to and identify with some local symbols and they interact between each other more intensively than in another context, operating in networks of communication, interests and mutual support, with the propose of achieving certain goals, satisfying needs, solving problems and planning the relevant social functions at a local level”.

In actual societies, there is considerable evidence of cohesion and commonality as in the case of street children communities, the gay community, virtual communities, sex workers’ communities and many other types of new communities emerging in today’s reality which do not match with the traditional definition of community.

Not opposing all the contributions addressed by many other sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists, and so on, I use the definition presented by Ander-Egg for all matters of this research work, since it presents the main features of the street children communities, which are the central focus of this study. This does not mean that this is the perfect and conclusive definition of what is or not community as a concept, but it provides enough tools to analyze and comprehend the phenomena of street children in Mozambique within their communal context.

2.3. Childhood as community issue in a context of structural changes in Mozambique

Dominelli (1999) quoting Ariés (1962) states that childhood exists as a historically developed category which has been ascribed meanings at different points in time. She also argues that children's lot in the community in which they live can be varied, one which ranges from middle-class cocooning in a well-resourced environment to hardships and privation in a poor one. Childhood can be marred through a number of conditions; some can be the absence of financial resources and the abuse of those responsible for their care (Dominelli 1999).

However, Dominelli (1999) also demonstrates that the community has a direct responsibility to care for children and has a direct influence on the social being of the child. This means that the issue of child care is not merely related to the financial situation of the family, since there are situations where childhood has nothing to do with how many financial resources one can have but, indeed, it has much to do with how many social networks a family can have with which to provide social support.

It is, nevertheless, true that economic factors influence directly or indirectly the childhood situation worldwide, but not solely.

In the Mozambican context, for instance, child welfare practices from a traditional point of view are based on communal responsibility inside the context of the extended family system or lineage, and the costs of raising children are not solely the responsibility of the biological parents.

Similarly in most African societies, a closely knit group of relatives commonly shares the costs of rearing children, in terms of emotion, time, finance and other material support, since all children together comprise the strength of the lineage (Wusu & Isiugo 2006).

Studies have indicated that the ubiquitous and cohesive nature of the extended family structure in traditional societies is the pillar supporting community-based childrearing practices (Fapohunda & Todaro 1988; Isiugo-Abanihe 1985; 1991 quoted by Wusu & Isiugo 2006) and consequently guaranteeing a specific context of childhood.

The extended family structure, which comprises generations of close relatives rather than a married couple and children, who live either in the same house or

compound or in a close and continuous relationship, dominate Sub-Saharan African society.

Nukunya (1992) observes that the extended family is a “social arrangement in which an individual has extensive reciprocal duties, obligations and responsibilities to his relations outside his nuclear family”. Within the framework of this family structure, a series of childrearing practices are maintained. Right from birth, surrogate mothers, maybe either mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law from either the husband’s or wife’s family, make themselves available to assist in caring for the new-born baby and the nursing mother (Fapohunda & Todaro 1988).

This is the context in which most children are born and grow in most Mozambican communities. But economic and political factors influence in general the meanings and expectations families give to children and to childhood, especially in rural areas in today’s realities.

The family system is an integral aspect of non-material culture, and every culture possesses strong potential for transformation. The family system in most of Sub-Saharan Africa has been undergoing implicit and explicit transformations that can be traced to internal and external factors (Ochallo-Ayayo 1997).

As observed by different studies, there are emerging indications of transformations in the African family, in response to general social, economic and political changes in different countries and societies (Wusu & Isiugo-Abanihe 2003; Ocholla-Ayayo 1997; Isiugo-Abanihe & Obono 1999 quoted by Wusu & Isiugo 2006).

The protracted and deep-rooted economic crisis that has affected nearly every country in Southern Africa has adversely impacted on the well-being of the majority of people (Mayor & Binde 2001; Sarr 2000; Basu & Stewart 1995; Mustapha 1992 in Chingunta 2002) and consequently the decline of the traditional child welfare system of most African communities.

The decline of the traditional child welfare systems influenced by civil wars, global climate changes, and natural disasters, is the main symptom of extreme poverty in most Southern African countries. As the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) demonstrate in most of their reports, over 40 percent of the population

in Sub-Saharan Africa live in absolute poverty or on purchasing power parity (PPP) of less than US\$ 1 per day (Chingunta 2002). In many cases, the structural readjustment programmes have worsened the situation through the closure of companies, social services reforms and budget reduction and retrenchment of workers (Chingunta 2002; Halon 1997).

These structural changes have directly and indirectly been challenging the local setting of child welfare and, as counter-effects of such challenges, the meanings of childhood as well as the social expectations of a child on the community level have been changing.

2.4. The meaning of ‘child’ in Mozambique: Some general aspects

The debate about who is a “child” and who is not plays an important role in the definition of social welfare programmes and child protection policies worldwide. Nevertheless, the concept of child and childhood has been used and applied in different ways by government and non-government organizations (NGOs), as well as by the general population (Mkandawire 1996).

According to Yenika-Agbaw (2009), childhood is, for many, that special period when children are sheltered from the harsh reality of life, when the child should be free from worry and, for others, childhood is more than this. As Henry Jenkins (1998) quoted by Yenika-Agbaw (2009) notes, childhood “is subject to the same historical shifts and institutional factors that shape all human experience”, and is not simply a “utopian space, separate from adult cares and worries”.

It is very difficult to find detailed and accurate information on the situation of children and their social meanings within the whole of Southern Africa, due to the multicultural¹⁰ aspects of the context. However, there are high concerns on the

¹⁰ In this study, by culture I mean a set of beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that the members of a community or society use to identify themselves, to interact with each other and to manage their social environment, and these values, customs, behaviours and artifacts are transmitted from generation to generation through learning. By multicultural context I mean that a given context has several elements of different cultural background. I do not mean that this is the only definition of culture, since that there are different traditions and positions on regard to this concept from different scientific backgrounds such as anthropological, sociological, psychological, economic and even biological. I only use this definition as the one which fits to the study objectives.

marginalization of children due to the adverse effects of the increasing poverty, HIV/AIDS and the structural changes taking place with its effects (Mkandawire 1996).

In a Mozambican context, government organizations and NGOs tend to define a child under an international frame such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which regards all people under the age of 18 years old as children (Republic of Mozambique 2004; CRC 1990).

In opposition to this official definition, there are cultural perceptions of a child and childhood which directly influence the implementation and effectiveness of policy definition and child protection strategies at a local level. As FDC (2002) and De Barros & Tajú (2001) argue, the roles and social spaces of children's action are determined by the cultural references of the group in which they are embedded.

This means that the concept of 'child' is culturally bound and should not be understood in general; there is no one universal concept of child. For this matter, the definition used by government institutions and NGOs does not take into account the cultural aspect of these meanings and, consequently, the defined policies for child welfare do not bring the expected results.

In Mozambican child protections' strategies, the definition of a child is clearly similar to what is stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These strategies, also determine what the rights of children are and how children should be treated in order to observe their rights. But theory is one thing and practice is another, for communities in different cultural settings may define children very differently, and how these communities define children's rights and child welfare may vary enormously.

A good example of these disparities can be found in the following statement by a traditional leader in Boboole-Marracuene (Maputo province), during a conversation in 2009 when asked about what he thinks a child is or when a person is considered a child or not¹¹:

¹¹ The content of this quote was recalled after the conversation had taken place and was reconstructed, since I did not make use of any voice or video recorder, nor even take notes during the conversation. I made notes right after the conversation had finished.

“You see that man there (pointing to a boy in a small shop, +/- 14 years), that is not a child, that is a man because he has his family, a house and he helps his parents financially (...) Now look at that one there (pointing at a man +/- 30 year), that is his father’s burden, he will always be a baby, because he is lazy and unable to have a wife, a house and take care of himself”.

In another context I asked a local leader in Zavala (Inhambane province) what he thought about children, girls and when they could be considered grown up and not be children any more. His answer was as follows:

“They are children all those who cannot sustain themselves. But girls are not children; they are women when they can have their husband and have their children in their home without bothering their relatives. From the day they see the first moon¹², they are women, not any more children, they need to be educated to take care of their families”.

From the statement above, it is clearly shown that the meaning of child is based on the physical characteristics/abilities of the person, his financial and body development. These statements demonstrate, too, that girls and boys have different positions regarding when he/she stops being a child.

However, it is important to keep clear that these perceptions of child and childhood should not be seen as the same within the whole of the Mozambican context due its multicultural setting. My interest here is solely to make sure that we do not take for granted the meanings given to child and childhood in different contexts. It is on this basis that I reflect on the origins of street children, having as a trampoline the positions shared by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory.

¹² Understood as first menstruation period

2.5. The origins of the street children phenomenon from Bronfenbrenner's perspective

Debates about the family have revealed a split between those who claim that the current diversity of family forms is nothing new and those who say that there is a breakdown in the family and that the origins of this breakdown are to be located in a collapse of value systems (Akuffo 2001; Mlema 1999). In the light of this debate, it is important to try and specify what, if any, are the changes that contemporary families are facing and were not faced by families in the past.

This is especially the case in most Sub-Saharan Africa where the family is said to have collapsed as a key socialization agent due to a number of causal factors. These factors include poverty, the “feminization” of poverty (Osório 2000), the phenomenon of teenage pregnancies and structural social changes (economic, cultural and political) influenced by international economic patterns and policies (UNICEF 2001; 2004; 2006.).

The combined impact of these factors has been the reduction in the ability of parents to fend for their children. Mlema (1999) notes that, this has resulted in various psychological, economic and (perhaps political) pressures and, increasingly, the failure of parents and families to provide their children with basic support and care.

In response to this situation, and especially in families where there is poor socialization of children combined with domestic violence, physical and psychological abuse, divorces and lack of food, health care, quality housing, social support and assistance, children are forced to look for an alternative surrogate family relationship. Many are drawn to the street world where they engage in a variety of menial activities in order to survive.

Based on these assumptions, I use Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to shed light on how street children originate in order to be able to address socio-cultural animation as a community social work practice with knowledge of what social aspects influence the origins of street children in general.

2.5.1. Socio-ecological theory and street children phenomena

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005) was a Russian-American psychologist, being much known for developing his ‘Ecological Systems Theory’ and as a co-founder of the ‘Head Start’ programme in the United States for disadvantaged pre-school children. His ecological development theory has been one of the most generally used theories to analyze the phenomena of early childhood. The importance of the theory of ecological development lies in the fact that personal development is seen in relation to different levels of social systems.

According to Davidova & Kokina (2002), this theory introduced the methodological principles of educational research as a systems approach, according to which an object is studied as a system of its structural and functional relations.

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory (1989) is based on Kurt Lewin’s (1935) classical formula, according to which behaviour emanates from the person and the environment, which consists of five interdependent subsystems, specifically the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono-systems (Bronfenbrenner 1979).

The microsystem sees the person’s immediate basic day-to-day experiences of his/her environment (Berk 2000). Here Bronfenbrenner (1993), quoted by Berk (2000), looks at the patterns of the roles, activities and personal relations that the individual has in the face-to-face settings which comprise individual particular social encounters (Maphatane 1994; Harper & Carver 1999). Structures in the microsystem include family, schools, neighbourhood, or even childcare institutions. At this level, relationships have a bi-directional impact on the child’s development: this is to say from the child and towards the child. The child’s behaviour and beliefs, for example, are influenced by such people as his parents, friends, and neighbours, but at the same time he influences their behaviour and beliefs.

It is important to mention that this bi-directional impact is not only related to the microsystem level of relationships; it goes beyond all other levels, although it is stronger at this level.

From the microsystem level we can trace the origins of street children as a consequence of adverse factors in the child’s immediate experience within the family structure and environment (De Moura 2002.). Some of these adversities include

poverty, hunger, abusive family life, degradation, violence, orphaned situation, child labour at family level, and so on. Therefore, the quality of interactions that children have with their immediate families and neighbourhoods will be a large contributory factor in whether they move onto the streets or not.

The mesosystem is, according to Bronfenbrenner (1993), the level that considers the interactions between several microsystems in which individuals shift between various roles as a result of moving between one microsystem context to the other. This would include, as Harper & Carver (1999) say, the individual's roles in relation to school, the neighbourhood, day-care centres, peers, doctors, religious institutions and the family (Harper & Carver 1999; Berk 2000).

When reflecting on the push factors for children deciding to live on the street under the mesosystem, Maphatane (1994) states that families are on the whole socially and emotionally isolated, often producing reactionary problems especially with regard to their children, suffering from multi-problem situations such as divorces, marital problems, substance abuse, child neglect and abuse, ill health and sometimes the death of a parent. Often many of their problems are related to a lower socio-economic status, unemployment, poor housing and poverty.

The family system operates as the primary microsystem for emotional nurturance, support and guidance necessary for healthy development (Bronfenbrenner 1993), and if he/she does not find these elements fulfilled by their families, they will then rely on their own resourcefulness in order to meet their needs, which in turn will expose them to life on the street (Cosgrove 1990; Berk 2000).

Violence and sexual abuse in the family home have also been cited as important contributing factor in children turning to street life. Neglect and abandonment are also found to be common, in addition to the failure to provide adequate food, clothing or any medical care. Emotional mistreatment, however, is found to be the most common occurrence, and this includes verbal abuse such as swearing, name calling, derogatory comments and a constant barrage of shouting, blaming and child labour enforcement from relatives (Marrengula 2007).

An important factor that contributes to children taking to street life is related to multiple-headed households where structural characteristics within the family system often influence a child's decision to leave home. Frequently, street children are from

female-headed households, in which single parenthood is mostly headed by grandmothers and extended family members; this may be associated with poverty situations and with an orphaned child situation due to the high rates of HIV/AIDS and deaths.

There are usually two or more generations living in one household, with children often alternating between more than one household. As a result, there are many caretakers in the home with each one responding towards the responsibilities of the child in his or her own way. Often this results in confusion and a general atmosphere of control rather than of nurturance, guidance and discipline (Maphatane 1994).

Studies (Medicins du Monde 2000; FDC 2006; UNICEF 2001) indicate that a low-income status within families has an influence on a child's decision to live on the street in Mozambique. While families frequently tend to depend on their grandparents' financial help and pensions, many families actually encourage their children to 'work' on the street in order to supplement the family income (Maphatane 1994).

Moreover, while in some instances a low income can be correlated with the increase in the number of street children, this is not necessarily universal, and many communities that are characterized by poverty do not necessarily have street children. This position reinforces the fact that family cohesion can overcome poverty in keeping most families working together for the benefit of the family (Dallape 1996).

On the other hand, the attitude and behaviour of the general community towards children who roam the streets has also been found to have a large influence on whether they are more likely to remain on the streets or not. Maphatane (1994) says that the general attitude towards street children was one of indifference, their presence on the streets often being accepted as the 'norm'. This unconcerned attitude was manifested, not only by the community in general, but particularly by family members themselves, which was further compounded by the fact that there was no pressure being exerted by the community on the family either. As a result, an apathetic attitude by family members to discipline or regulate the behaviour of their children was maintained (Maphatane 1994).

The exosystem, the third level of analysis, involves social settings without the individual. The structures in this level influence the child's development by interacting with some structures in the child's microsystem (Berk 2000). For example, at this level

the structure of the larger community, the community's resources, the workplace, schooling, the education board, community health organizations and welfare services, legal services, neighbours, the extended family, friends of the family and the mass media in general play an important role in childhood and in what the term 'child' means in reality from a local point of view.

Harper & Carver (1999) argue that the processes of the exosystem are thought to exert a one-way influence on the individual, even though s/he does not have an immediate participation in its processes and any resources made available by the exosystem will either operate to impoverish or to enrich the quality of micro- and mesosystem interactions.

Therefore, this level takes into account how experiences in one setting will influence the experiences in the individual's immediate context, which can be either advantageous, fostering a better quality of life, or disadvantageous, resulting in the individual existing at a lowered standard of living.

In the context of the street children situation, the large communities and their social conditions are relevant. The primary aim of welfare policy is to guarantee that all citizens have access to community, social and health services and to the economic resources of the country. As such, employment and education play an important role in meeting the needs of the community.

Poverty and unemployment are directly linked and influenced by the labour markets (Cuinhane 2006) and, by inference, these affect the welfare of street children.

The concept of 'poverty' is characterized by the inability of individuals, households or communities to provide adequate resources to adequately meet a minimum standard of living (World Bank 2003). An impoverished community is generally characterized by factors such as social alienation, economic and labour exclusion, food insecurity, and over-crowding, marginal access to electricity, inadequate water supply, insufficient access to medical and health services and a general disintegration of the family unity.

As Maphatane (1994) states, lack of housing has presented an equally complex set of characteristics for the government as well as for communities. With rapid urbanization and migration there has been a tremendous influx of people from rural to

urban areas. In addition to unemployment, the shortage of housing has also contributed to the establishment of squatter communities and impoverished living conditions (Maphatane 1994; Cuinhane 2006).

From the educational point of view it is important to mention that the government of Mozambique has been implementing programmes to expand the education system on the basis of Education for All (EFA), based on the Millennium Goals (MG) established by the United Nations. Even with many new policies to reverse the situation of non-access to education in Mozambique, where the government is aiming at providing more schools in rural and urban areas, these have not been totally satisfactory.

The education system is still facing a shortage of schools, classrooms, textbooks and learning materials, associated with the fact that most children have to travel long distances from home to school and from school to home. There are even cases in which a child must walk about 20 km per day to get access to schooling, especially in rural areas. There is also a lack of allocated funds for teachers with proper qualifications, as well as for new teaching and learning programmes. Basic infrastructure such as electricity, water and toilets are also found to be lacking in most Mozambican schools.

There has been a shift in the political and socio-economic status of Mozambique, and much inequality can be linked to poverty and the social hierarchy evident both historically and currently.

The government policy, economic infrastructure, community resources and social infrastructure are important in dealing with the needs of families and children. While Mozambique is attempting at improving its policies on infrastructure and is currently aiming to provide more resources for the community, there are budgetary constraints and progress is slow. This has a marked effect on the lives of street children because they are then limited by the slow progress at the community level that has a direct influence on the stability of family life.

The macrosystem is considered to be the utmost level of child's development. It is the over-arching societal ground plan for the ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner 1993). For Bronfenbrenner, at this level there is a hierarchical pattern of systems that include the government, policies, laws and customs of one's culture, subculture or social class, broad social ideologies, and values and belief systems (Berk 2000). For example, if it is culturally stated that parents have the sole responsibility to

raise their children, and if the culture itself does not provide enough resources for parents to be able to fulfil this duty, this, in turn, affects the structure in which parents function and their responsibility towards their children is directly affected at the microsystem level.

Mozambique is a multicultural country, with about 54 ethnic groups and a diverse set of people with different origins and varied beliefs. Cultural diversity is a challenge because it means discussing the ‘differences’ and similarities in factors such as one’s culture, race, religion, traditions and ethnicity. Culture at a macro-level can be seen as a social construct that operates to identify the diverse characteristics and attributes shared with others. It functions to shape the feelings, experiences, behaviour, values, norms and institutional patterns fundamental to a society (Bubolz & Sontag 1993; Matsumoto 1996).

A cross-cultural perspective is therefore particularly relevant to Mozambique, which is an extremely diverse society in itself, providing a richness of diverse beliefs and behaviour of individuals in a variety of spaces. The influence of behaviour and beliefs on the lives of street children and how they construct themselves is particularly important in the most influential areas of day-to-day living, such as work, the educational environment, religious and spiritual beliefs and health practices.

This is particularly important when recalling the need to be culturally aware of policy definition and intervention plans and strategies that focus on child welfare in Mozambique.

Mozambique can be mentioned as a collectivist value system in the sense that local practices place emphasis on interdependence, in which work is viewed as the fulfilment of an obligation to a larger group and a function of the community rather than a function of self (Matsumoto 1996). This has large implications in understanding who a child is and what expectation society has of him and automatically on how street children perceive themselves as active agents in society.

A filter-down effect of a collectivist belief system can be seen in how street children function on the streets. For example, street children need to work within ‘street family groups’ in order to generate income for the survival of the group as a whole. In this way, it can be argued that, as street children generally come from collectivist societies, the way they understand themselves in relation to ‘working’ on the street will

be largely dependent on these cultural belief systems, which will, in turn, determine the success of the survival of the street child and the street group. Here they start to build a sense of a community of street children, sharing and establishing exchange at a material and cultural level of life.

Socialization of culture through the educational system is also important at the macro level. Education is not only solely based on an infrastructure that teaches children skills and knowledge, but it also socializes children, educating and reinforcing cultural values. This is done in several ways. A culture will influence the educational system according to what it believes is important to learn at a particular point in time (Matsumoto 1996). For example, in a rural community, it may be deemed more valuable for a child to learn to take care of the fields in the farm, to take care of the cows, to herd cattle or grow vegetables than to learn how to read and write. Despite the different environmental contexts, different forms of education reinforce different cultural values, attitudes and standards that in turn influence how people perceive themselves and their environment.

Religious attitudes differ among groups, societies and cultures, which form the basis of different values and behavioural practices within the community and the family environment. This has a direct impact on how the family is constructed, which influences the quality of family life and the attitude and involvement that parents have with their children.

The chronosystem deals with the socio-historical conditions and changes in individuals and their environments over time. It encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to the child's development. It therefore reflects dynamic environmental (ecological) transitions, encompassing entries, exits, milestones, and turning points over time (Cobb & Seery 2001).

Time is something that is related to events and transitions that impact on political, economic and social change in history and which has often altered cultural practices and belief systems. Mozambique is not an isolated country from the other social, political and economic systems around the world, and its relationship with the world has had a large impact on its internal social, political, economic and even cultural practices. Peacock (1994) believes that the phenomenon of street children as a symptom of social change, urbanization and poverty has been associated with the Industrial Revolution of

the 19th century, largely impacting on the disintegration of the family unit. He explains that during the 20th century this situation increased world-wide with “large-scale socio-political trauma and deprivation...civil and world wars, ethnic ‘cleansing’, the use of youths in armed conflict, child prisoners, military rule and institutionalized racism...” (Peacock 1994, 139.).

Similarly, Marrengula (2007) examined the historical time periods of economic conditions and transitions in Mozambique from 1975 to 2006 and linked this to a deeper cause of poverty that resulted in the emergence of street children. He asserted that political and economic changes from a Mozambican perspective, which were influenced by the World Bank and IMF monetary policy, had a structural impact on social life conditions, which have directly influenced the way families and government interacted in the provision of child welfare, forcing the government to reduce its responsibilities and, thus, families had to find their own ways to provide care for the children.

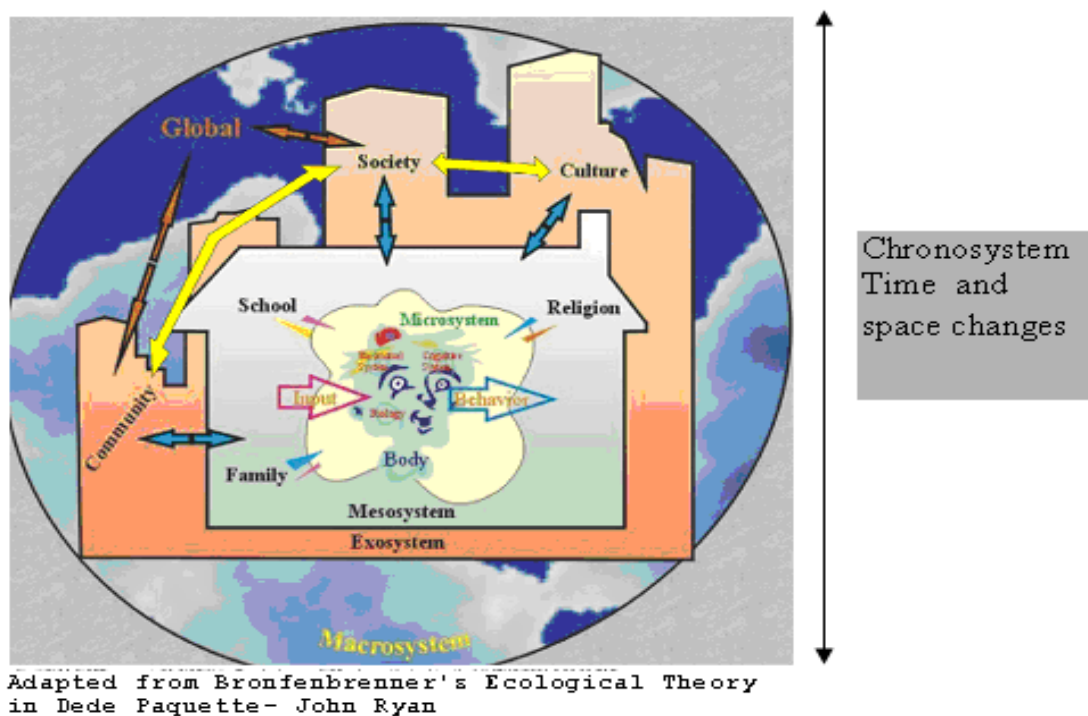


Figure 1. The Brofenbrenner ecological framework¹³

¹³ Taken from Paquette & Ryan (2001), an online discussion on Brofenbrenner’s ecological theory.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model provides a framework that facilitates the understanding of different systems within the society that impact on the family environment. It allows for greater insight into the problems that families face and how their lives are influenced by the socio and economic status of the country. In addition, it also supports the fact that street children should not be seen in isolation of their environment, and that, this has a significant impact on their social development.

2.5.2. Street children community

As demonstrated in the previous section, street children can be understood on the basis of the ecological perspective which focuses on the children according to the environment in which they are.

In this perspective, street children can be defined as a group of children living on the streets, where they get their basic social support through solidarity networks, with their life determined by the community in which they belong (the street children community), the community they come from (original community, including parents, extended families, the cultural background they have, based on religion, traditional beliefs, social education, and so on), the political system in which they are integrated (legal and political definitions of children's rights and its applicability in the context in which they live, child welfare system in their context, and so on), and the global position regarding their existence as human beings throughout time (children's rights, human rights, global actions and practices on the perception of child protection and global well-being, environmental issues, global economic crisis and its influences at a local level, and so on). This includes the local and international changes on issues related to child protection and welfare.

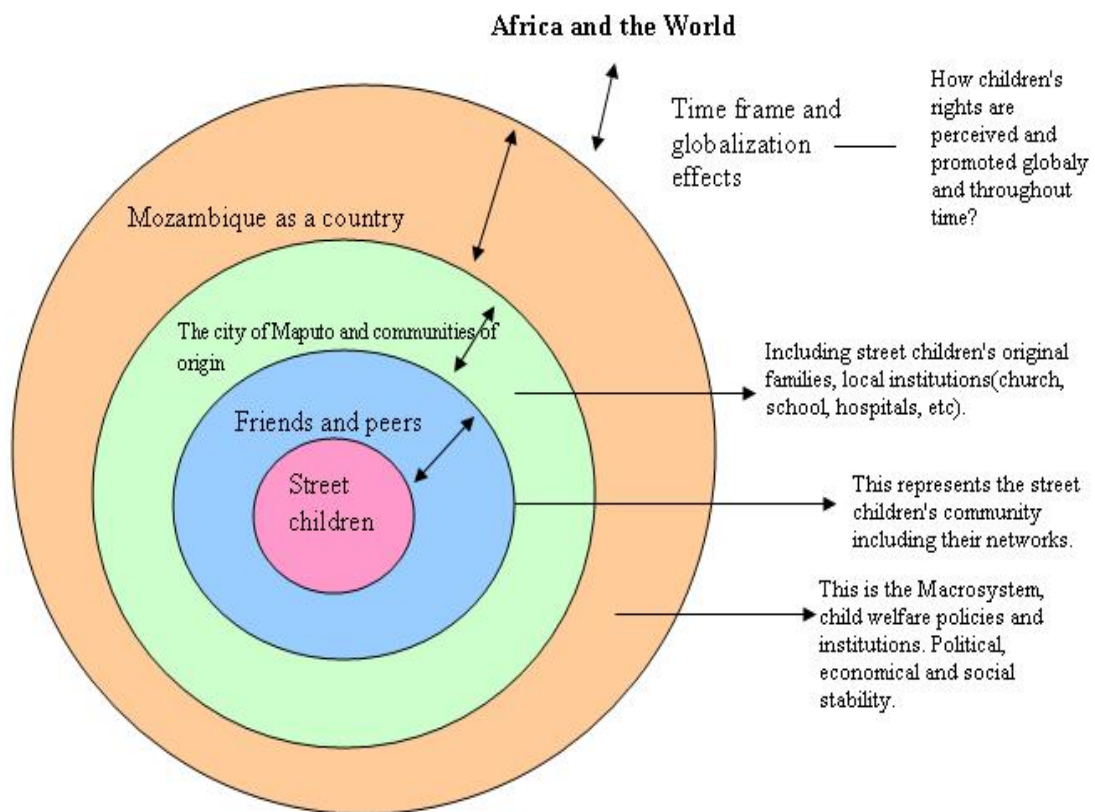


Figure 2. Street children within Brofenbrenner's approach

This definition shows that street children are interconnected in different ways with the context in which they live, being influenced and influencing the social system in which they are integrated, from the micro and meso levels, which refer to their own community (the child as an individual and the street children community), to the macro level and chrono level, which refer to the national and global level of understanding, as discussed above.

Despite variations in the leading causes for the emergence and development of the problem of street children at the global level, street children in Mozambique show many similarities to street children worldwide. Poverty, family breakdown, and child abuse and neglect seem to be the leading causes for the problem as mentioned in Chapter I.

Many Mozambican families who are economically marginalized have become seriously dysfunctional and find themselves placing their children in circumstances that

have resulted in such children leaving home and trying to survive in the often unprotected and hazardous street milieu.

It is in the light of the previous sections that I define the concept of street children communities as certain groups of children living on the streets, sharing a social space, values and similar practices in their everyday lives, influenced by the different social and cultural backgrounds of their original communities.

This definition stems from the context and lifestyle of street children with a focus on the spatial location (where they live), living circumstances (how they live) and social networks they have in that context. This does not mean that all street children in a certain location (place) form a community, but several groups of street children located in a specific region, with similar coping strategies and feeling of belonging to that context, form a community of street children. They also have a social and cultural background which influences their identity and social behaviour.

This definition is important in the sense that, when working with street children, it is vital to understand their social networks at a local level, and at the same time to review their social background, their original families, their original communities, in order to clearly understand their perspectives of action and interaction.

2.6. Addressing a community-based approach on street children's welfare

According to Dominelli (1999), the community as the space within which the child is embedded shares a collective responsibility to care for him/her. Thus, those living in the community have the responsibility to care for all children living within it. A community does not exist outside the relationships which are established between the individual child and those who represent their community formally or informally.

Based on the definition of street children communities, presented in the previous section, I address the need for social workers to understand the nature of the community within which the child lives, in this case street children communities and their society, and be able to develop and tackle professional relationships with those who act on behalf of children in that society/community so that it will be possible to mediate and

intermediate amongst the widest possible groups in providing support for a particular child (Dominelli 1999).

However, this is not a simple process, and one cannot only think that community work with street children is done just by getting in contact with local street children and establish contact/communication. There are theoretical and ontological settings that need to be taken into account when addressing real community work within any kind of social environment or group of people.

With regard to this aspect, Dominelli (ibid) says that social workers need additional knowledge to be negotiators; to mediate between conflicting interests in the complex situations they encounter and work in the community to mobilize community resources in support of children. This means that community work can be an important dimension in promoting preventive approaches to child welfare.

It is on the basis of negotiating and mediating conflicting interests at the community level that I introduce SCA praxeology as a social work practice, with an interest in promoting an emancipatory practice in which community members become active promoters of their social development and the social worker is seen as a mediator of all activities taking place.

When it comes to the idea of emancipatory practice, one could ask what its meaning is and what its use is as a social work practice. It is important to observe that in communities and societies with critical situations of economic, social and cultural problems, social actors (members of the community or society) need to be aware of their capacity, as a community, to change the social environment, and that is what I mean by emancipatory practice, in a more simplistic way.

Certainly, in order to promote activities that give local community members the opportunity to become aware of their collective reality and to develop the skills to change it, I recommend the application of SCA praxeology, which is discussed in Chapter 3 and 4.

The challenges presented by community work for socio-cultural animators (social workers), in this context, are in mobilizing collective participation, drawing on educational practices developed with people, promoting awareness and engaging people with their own social development through a specific project.

When it comes to the context of social work practice, the relationship is far more complex. Firstly, there remains some unsettled tension in the relationship between social work and community work.

As Dominelli (1990) notes, there are authors who argue, on the one hand, that community work is a separate distinct entity with its own traditions and political philosophy, while, on the other hand, there are those for whom community development is one of many practical methods of social work practice.

In relation to this, Mowbray & Meekosha (1990) and Kenny (1999) argue that, within this conflicting relationship between these disciplines, there are those who are completely hostile to social work and concerned in distancing community development from what they see as an allegedly conservative profession.

Authors like Goldsworthy (2002) and O'Connor, Wilson & Setterlund (1998) react to this position, demonstrating that, in recent decades, mainstream social work has incorporated structural and systemic perspectives, giving an Australian case as an example, in which the work being done by most social workers within the concept of client in their social environment examines the relationship between individuals and broader social and community structures and networks.

Although there may be some differences between community development and social work, the reality shows that they have much more in common. This is the case of professionals and practitioners in social work and in community development who are engaged in promoting social justice and social change.

On the other hand, Earle & Fopp (1999), Clarke (2000), Carroll (2005), and Coulton (2005), amongst others, defend that, if both practical and academic fields (social work and community development) share knowledge and skills for social justice and social change, this could facilitate personal and community well-being in general.

This could be particularly useful in Mozambique and more specifically in rural communities where people live far from each other, and care services are often difficult to access due to multiple factors related to cost and distance. In this study, I reflect and address the combination of these factors from a Socio Cultural Animation (SCA) praxeologic perspective with a street children community in Maputo.

There are of course, situations of tensions between the meanings given to social work and community work, which I will not deal with in this study, and to avoid that, I define social work in a more general and broader way, as professional intervention to address situations of personal agony and crisis by determining and changing the social environment in which people are located. This definition comes from the International Foundation of Social Work (IFSW 2000), which states that the social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relations, empowerment and the liberation of people to enhance well-being.

In relation to that definition, I define the term community work as the use of community sources (community members, natural resources and knowledge) through participation to promote social change. This definition is related to principles of SCA praxeologic principles of social action which entail 'pedagogical', 'cultural' and 'social' (Kurki 2000a; Ander-Egg 1997; Quintana 1992) aspects in different areas and methodological strategies, with a primary purpose of transforming the social reality through active participation (Gillet 2006; Freire 1983).

However, in relation to the idea of community work, Dominelli (1999) argues that community approaches can be exploited by public and private services for children and families in need, by asking their extended families to accept the duty of caring for their relatives in unpropitious circumstances. This often means that women (and grandparents) get called upon to provide free labour time and other unpaid forms of support. Yet in some communities these same women are overburdened with unpaid work as they work to relieve the financial difficulties in the home.

Mozambique can be a good example, where, due to situations of HIV/AIDS high mortality rates and other natural disasters, grandparents and neighbourhood social systems end up being the main promoters of child protection and child welfare without any assistance from official child welfare programmes.

2.7. Summary

As a summary, this chapter aimed at clarifying the basis for fieldwork practice to take place under the auspices of community work framed on socio-cultural animation. As such, I presented a general understanding of the concept of the community and street

children community. Based on these concepts, I also brought into the discussion the meaning of child and childhood from some African perspectives in a very general perspective. However, I also argued that these concepts are very contextual, and they should not be taken for granted.

The contextual aspects of childhood and the child have a profound influence on how policies and child welfare programmes are defined and implemented. My interest with these statements, which might seem too general, is to recall the need for a local comprehension of social reality in order to address any kind of community work.

It is on these grounds that I propose Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory as a way to understand the phenomena of street children, as a unique group of people influenced by the context in which they are immersed. However, the context (community) of street children's existence is directly and indirectly influenced by the society, and this is also influenced by other global elements. These influences are reciprocal and are not only one way.

It is because of these global, local and communal aspects influencing street children's lives that we can find some similarities and differences in street children's push and pull factors, making this phenomenon a global problem with contextualized characteristics.

In a global context of street children phenomena, social work is called in this approach, in order to understand the nature of the community within which street children are embedded, and then professional practices should be developed from an emancipatory perspective. To this end, I advocate SCA as a social work practice for a community-based approach that can be used in mediating and negotiating relationships, promoting awareness and the commitment of community members in solving social problems.

The following chapter reflects on SCA as a theoretical approach of this study and demonstrates the foundations of SCA as a participatory social work practice.

Chapter 3 : Socio-cultural animation

*"Emancipate yourselves from mental
slavery. None but ourselves can free
our mind..."* Bob Marley

3.1. Introduction

Socio-cultural animation (SCA) is a recent discipline in academic arenas, dating from the post-World War II period. Experts from different contexts, such as Jean-Claude Gillet (2001, 2004, 2006) in France, Ezequiel Ander-Egg (1987, 1997) in Argentina, Pierre Besnard (1990) in France, Paulo Freire (1983, 1988, 1994, 1996, 1998) in Brazil, José V. Merino Fernandez (1997), José Maria Quintana (1992), Gloria Perez Serrano (2006), Jaume Trilla Bernet (1997), Maria Salas Larrazabal (1997) in Spain, Leena Kurki (2000a, 2001, 2009) in Finland, among others, have dedicated their lives to this subject, reflecting and constructing social theories and action perspectives in different contexts.

In this chapter, the objective is to present the philosophical and epistemological dimensions of SCA in order to be able to define the methodological settings of community-based social work practice in child protection issues and more specifically in street children's active participation for social change in Maputo, Mozambique.

The chapter is divided into 6 sections as follows: section 1 presents the definitions of SCA; section 2 looks at the origins of SCA from a historical perspective, providing a review of historical trends as a scientific subject and as a practical methodology; section 3 presents the ontological and epistemological discussion of SCA; the section 4 addresses the theoretical foundations of SCA in this study; and the section 6 makes a brief reflection on the praxeological approach of this study.

3.2. Definitions of socio-cultural animation

Definitions of socio-cultural animation (SCA) as a scientific concept vary from context to context in different social sciences approaches, in terms of its specificity, identity, role and function.

According to a French professor of education, Jean-Claude Gillet, SCA is one of those open and slippery concepts whose meaning is difficult to determine. Throughout history, practitioners, trainers, employers, and researchers have been searching for a reliable and accepted definition of SCA, and up to now this theme has not yet been exhausted. The theoretical arguments, the semantic and etymological works are often of little help in trying to see things more clearly (Gillet 2001).

As Gillet (2008) mentions, socio-cultural animation has today, after 30 years (50 to 60 years¹⁴) of existence, become a system with its institutions, equipment and actors. It has its own set of methodologies for action and development, which is done through a process of permanent registration, promotion and improvement in situations where the stakes are at once cultural, social, economic and political. This system can be considered as praxis since it is a slow action of the past, but is open to a future, a historicity. It is a place of conflict in its meaning, purposes and issues.

On the other hand, the Spanish professor of social pedagogy at the University of Barcelona, Jaume Trilla (1997, 18) mentions that the term ‘animation’ in general, as given in dictionaries, addresses the idea of “action and the effect of animating” and immediately finds the verb “to animate” which means “to infuse the soul”, “to infuse value”, “to infuse forces and activity to unanimated things”, “to make a certain appearance pleasant”, “to take action and effort to something”, “to communicate happiness and movement to a group of people”, “to dare on something”. All those meanings of the verb “to animate” do not clarify what SCA means in reality, but they show how complex and comprehensive this expression is.

The Finnish social pedagogue Leena Kurki (2000a) shares these positions by stating that the term animation/animación is rooted in the Latin word “*anima*”, life/soul, meaning “to give life or spirit to something”. She also mentions that it can be derived from the word “*animus*” with clear links to motivation and movement. Kurki (ibid) goes forward by mentioning that from an etymological perspective, animation means giving life, motivating oneself for activity, forming relationships, working for a good society. For her, fostering participation and inspiring people to become self-aware and fulfil themselves are key ideas in all definitions of socio-cultural animation.

¹⁴ The author mentions 30 years, but in fact it is about 60 years.

Then again, the Brazilian pedagogue, Paulo Freire (1983; 1994a) considers Animation, as mediation which is before all a dialogue. For him, there are two realities in the term ‘animation’: one is relative to interpersonal and collective relations, and the other is related to the process of generating data and results. In both dimensions, animation is intermediary, not having a precise object which characterizes the content of its activity.

All these visions are complementary to each other, and they are not mutually exclusive. To say that animation is to infuse life means that it forms relationships or a dialogue. The main essence of it is the participation of those who are to be in such a relationship. It is in this perspective that Argentinean Professor Ander-Egg (1997), when reflecting on the genesis of SCA as a concept, presents its essence as the practice of the participation of individuals in certain contexts. For him, spaces for participation and activities sustain SCA.

There are four different scopes of SCA according to Ander-Egg (1997): individual, social, cultural and educational.

The *individual* scope of SCA tends to stimulate the emergence of people who are able to be involved and committed in contributing their capabilities and abilities on behalf of the transformation of their environment or their immediate circumstances, and enable them to function as autonomous and organized social subjects.

The *social* scope of SCA tends to strengthen the social structure, through participation in the associative and collective life, through organizations capable of giving answers to problems and needs at the societal level, and to develop the sense of belonging and affirmation of their own identity, with total respect for all manifestations of pluralism (political, cultural, religious, etc.).

With the *cultural* scope, Ander-Egg (1997) recalls the need to convert an “expecting public” into a “participating actor” in social and cultural activities. The aim is to facilitate participation in the entire process, creating opportunities for connection and communication, where resources will facilitate collective and individual creativity as an alternative to passive consumption. With its *educative* scope, SCA offers real areas of expertise for setting up democratic habits and ways of action, while in another vein, it sensitizes people to the concern of learning to develop personal or individual life.

Based on the statements above, different conceptualizations have been raised by different theorists of social pedagogy.

The French revolutionary syndicalist Pierre Besnard (1988) defines SCA as “...any action, within a group, a collectivity or context, which aims to develop communication and to structure social life, using semi-directive methods; it is a method of integration and participation” (Besnard in Debesse & Mialaret 1988, 14). In this definition the need to develop communication and to structure social life is related to the idea of permanent dialogue, where members of a group are invited to participate, reflect and contribute to the structure of their social environment.

On a similar path, Ander-Egg says that SCA “(...) is a form of socio-pedagogical action, which, without being the only one, is basically characterized by the search and intention of generating processes of the participation of people” (Ander-Egg 1997, 9). Socio-pedagogical action in this sense refers to permanent learning and the exchange of knowledge about the social reality of a certain group of people in a specific context, from the participative point of view.

This position is shared by Kurki (2000a), who states that SCA is a combination of all measures which are directed at creating participatory processes to help people grow into active agents both in their own and their community’s development. The keyword for SCA is participation: gathering together to act where people are, in their own circle of life, in their everyday world. SCA is always a movement of pedagogical realization, participation and social creativity. Therefore, educational, social and cultural dimensions come together as parallel and equal components in its structure.

Other theorists associate SCA with the community development process, which is at the same time “integral and endogenous: integral as able to unite to itself the economic, social, cultural, and moral progresses, reinforcing their mutual relationship; endogenous, as its passage to a higher level, in a positive sum of relationships with others ...” (Lenoir 1989, 50 in Gillet 2006, 10–15).

José Maria Quintana, professor of social pedagogy in Madrid, defines SCA by what it aims at: “It aims at making every individual and every social group the protagonist of his own life, without being exploited by other people or social groups that would be used as a means for their own selfish ends. That means to trigger, in those oppressed groups, autonomous liberation processes, starting from becoming aware of

their actual situation, assuming the role they could and should play, and the resources that have the potential to play that role” (Quintana 1992, 47–50.) .

It is important to mention that community work on the basis of SCA comes from and for the community's ultimate goal to promote participation and social dynamism, from the processes of the accountability of individuals in the management and direction of their own resources. Here SCA is seen as an appropriate approach to motivate and exercise participation. It is conceived as an acquisition of awareness towards personal and structural change, as dynamic and dialectical process between management, technicians and people, and organized through associations, social movements, political parties, platforms and inter-associative networks.

As we can see, there are many and different definitions of what SCA might be and what it does, but in all these definitions, there are common elements such as participation, integration, and self-awareness. From these three elements, it is possible to find the heart of the concept of SCA, the idea of bringing people of a certain context into participation in their own life, and not permitting them to be passive and simple assistants in their own existence nor to become objects of intervention from others.

For the essence of this study, SCA is a methodology (a way to take action) of social and cultural action aiming at local development, designed through a rational and systematic process of educational intervention. SCA is, in this study, a planned action on the basis of an analysis of contexts and situations, translated into a series of activities or practices that are intentional and embodied in an action project taking place at a specific environment, in a territorially defined community (in this case the street children communities) and based on the participation of groups, individuals or community members (street children, street groups, families, etc.).

The highest aspiration of SCA in this study is to ensure that the community (of street children) itself is capable of pursuing its own social and cultural development by pursuing the transformation of social reality, and by improving the quality of life of the community throughout active participation.

3.3. Origins and development of socio-cultural animation

There is no common position about the origin of SCA as a scientific discipline, but it is commonly accepted and believed that it has its roots in the 19th century. According to Gillet (2006), studies that focused on the professional field of animation and its historic constitution can be dated back to the early 1960s.

Historically and ideologically the term ‘socio-cultural animation’ has its origin in movements of popular education during the 19th and 20th centuries which aimed at providing access to culture, training adult citizens, officials and critics (Gillet 2001; Kurki 2000a). Pedagogically, this concept is the result of current approaches, giving value to professional arenas as places of expression and creativity. Sociologically, it is indicative of the rise of the leisure society and, culturally, it is expressive of the rising middle classes of the 60s and 70s (Gillet 2001).

According to Gillet (2006), there are several hypotheses for the roots of SCA. There are those for whom animation is rooted in the mists of time, from the emergence of social life in the world. This is the case with Delorme (1982) in Gillet (2006, 31–39), who says that “from the moment in which a group is constituted, ‘is produced (...) Animation’ ”, and Thery (1972) in Gillet (2000), who argues that through the game of interactions and relationships all are considered more or less “animators and / or animated” and what is new is essentially “the fact that we get to talk about it”. These assertions make SCA a phenomenon of all times.

On the other hand, there are those for whom animation was created in affiliations, where the first was the youth and laity recreational circles of the late 19th century, followed by the Popular Front (*Frente popular* - coalition government of leftist forces against fascism in France) of 1936 with the emergence of the first recognized leisure activities, then the early MJC (Maison des Jeunes et de la culture), and finally in places of outdoor activities and colonies developed by the FJT (Foyer de Jeunes Travailleurs) (Poujol 1978 in Gillet 2006).

Labourie (1978) in Gillet (2001) indicates that the term “animator” comes from a decree of October 17, 1945 from the Department of Popular Education of the Ministry of Education, while Besnard (1978) in Gillet (2001) documents the term for the first time “towards 1954”.

Some see the birth of animation “in the wake of the Church, on one hand and in the secular school, on the other” (Labourie 1978 in Gillet 2001). There is also the opinion that it overcame its low position with the main support of “La Confédération Générale des Ouvres Laïques” (General Confederation of Laity Projects), which would have influenced the Ministry of Youth (in France) to create the first title of animators in 1965. Others, however, see it as an effect produced by a Catholic elementary progressivism through the creation of the journal “Esprit” (Verdes-Leroux 1978 in Gillet 2006, 32).

Augustin (1986), quoted by Gillet (2006), writes that the field of animation and animators comes from the 60s in a context of rapid urbanization, and the development of consumerism and leisure. The state increased the budget for cultural initiatives and sport equipment (Ion & Tricat 1984 in Gillet, *ibid*) and, simultaneously, there was an increase in the visibility and effectiveness of players among movements of youth and popular education, which forged its unity in an ideological anti-state corpus (Gillet 2006).

Thus, Kurki (2000a) when referring to the origins of SCA says that, both as a concept and as an activity, it came into existence in France after the Second World War. Through the movement of “education populaire”, which mainly concentrated on the education and cultural needs of working people; it was discovered as a way of stimulating the lost democratic values as a result of the occupation and other wartime hardships.

To understand the movement, mobility and fluidity of the field of animation, and to shed light on its diversity, Gillet (2006; 2001) defined SCA in two universes: *a hot universe of animation* (where everything is possible and animation is a factor of transformation and social progress) and a *cold universe of animation* (the intent of transformation is in vain and animation is simply a tool of conservation of social standards). This debate lies in the implicit dispute between two philosophical positions on the issue of freedom: humanism and determinism.

3.3.1. The hot universe of animation

According to Gillet (2006), the first manifestation of identity and the social utility of animation are rooted in a social movement of resistance to the market economy, its mediocrity, passivity, indifference, exclusion, segregation and illusions of a subculture media. Animation represents the expression of the insurrection against conformism, bureaucracy and technocracy. For this reason it has a *militant* nature itself.

Participation in this sense is the *sine qua non* element of animation, representing the life of a group, neighbourhood or community. Participation is the remedy for social pathology where animation directs everyday life, impregnating the dynamic and directing its energies towards the personal and collective.

Therefore, animation is a promotional and educational activity for a society locked and fragmented, with “machine man”, the human “living in a pipe”, a consumer manipulated and controlled remotely, attempting to develop social communication, freedom of expression, the use of the word, exchange, dialogue, interaction and connection to a community. It is a design that gives value to the position of individuals in a society as actor, a true work of prevention which creates conditions for the realization of physical and intellectual responsibilities for everyone, a horizontal organizational process, meeting the traditional pyramid, which rejects power by force, liveliness, and elitism for the benefit of the detonation of force; it is the motivation for mutual partnership (Gillet 2006.).

In this sense, SCA is the pedagogy of discovery, of creativity, invention and innovation that goes far beyond the exclusive sector of leisure and free time, which works in emancipation and liberation, recalling the encouragement of individuals and groups to move forward to the aspired and motivated social change. This approach gives meaning to individual activities, a mandatory articulation of how and why cultural comprehensiveness brings urban development. This would be a way to help social systems give birth to development, giving them the opportunity to express their will and transform it into a draft action, based on freedom of thought, from which all others depend (Gillet 2006; Freire 1983). This is the expression of the humanist perspective of animation.

3.3.2. The cold universe of animation

This universe is made of illusion, within a humanist discourse and idealist perspective, which confuses activism and progress, with very vague positions which are unrelated to the actual cost of investment and the clear support of the population.

After abandoning the bases of the ideology of popular education, it confuses the real change in social relations with a philosophy of communication and its dissemination among humans through the multiplication of intermediate structures that operate only on the consequences and not on the causes of inequalities, ensuring the relationship of forces that cross the social system.

Animation can be equated to a brace, a factor of social cohesion, reducing social conflicts through channelling energies towards integration, consensus and the status quo. It is an insidious form of social control, a lubricant, a lap dog that perpetuates society, running in the direction of the transmission of an order delivered from the top of the societal pyramid - down and not vice versa (Gillet 2006). This is the expression of a determinist animation.

3.4. Ontological and epistemological foundations of SCA

Even with these contrasting facets, animation is a philosophy of praxis, meaning that social structures in which it falls are both determinants, but also products of human action, while making both possible and limited. Praxis is the meeting point between the oppositions of production (hot animation) and reproduction (cold animation).

By considering SCA as a philosophy of praxis, it means there is a link between theory and movement, a dialectical relationship based on concerted actions that is preceded and accompanied by evaluation and decision (Gillet 2001).

In this perspective, animation as praxis is oriented to social change; it is a conscious process itself, which seeks to reconcile theory and practice in a circular and dialectical process, in continuous interaction and creativity. Accordingly, and in this context, research on animation must be within the range of what is called praxeology, which more than the science for practice or action, refers to the science of praxis,

meaning the movement back and forth between experience, practice and thought (Gillet 2001; 2006).

These positions, presented by Gillet (2001; 2006), show the multidimensionality of SCA, in which the logic of research on animation must be multidisciplinary, covering several disciplines. This means that animation, like any action, is a synthesis of different disciplines in that it is a self-disciplinary process. As social practice, it is at once psychological, sociological, economic, legal, psychosocial, and so forth (Gillet 2001.).

Issues and areas of research that use animators in their duties are focused around the “local”, which requires crossing separate scientific approaches such as the sociology of the actor on such aspects of decision-making in social situations, social psychology with regard to the mediation functions of intermediary bodies such as social groups, and political and systemic sociology to make the link between the local and the global (Gillet 2001; 2004).

There are three more definitive syntheses which describe the ontological and epistemological foundations of SCA as a scientific discipline.

The first synthesis is based on the work of Pujol (1978), quoted by Gillet (2006), who presented three major theories that make the analysis of the field of animation possible as a societal phenomenon.

For Pujol (1978) in Gillet (2006, 36), animation is “a new social control and liberating regulator” around the analysis of the “emergence of a society with free time” (Dumazedier 1988 in Gillet 2006, 36.). The various forms of animation build a new model of ‘flexible social control’, non-sectarian and educational, where ‘individual expression has increased and the portion of institutional power has reduced’. The spontaneity of the individual would be expressed during free time in a logical connection between social and individual logic, reconciled with animation in a social order considered as ‘liberating’.

Animation as an “ideological conjuncture project” is based on ideas of participation, collective action, claims of social and cultural rights and the struggle against inequalities. These ideas have their theoretical foundation in pedagogies that are sometimes called “new pedagogies” (with Freinet and Decroly, for example) or designed as “non directives” (with Lourau, Lobrot and Lepasade) after the introduction

of the flow at the end of “Rogerian perspectives” around the 50s. Under this last influence, animation goes from being a simple pedagogical method to the formation of an ideological project path found in some socio-political trends of self-liberation which had their peak of success in the late 60s (Gillet 2006).

The second synthesis of animation is developed by the journal “Cahiers de l’animation”, shortly before its appearance (Elloy 1987 in Gillet 2004; 2006). Three concepts of animation were organized within three elements: *being* (the person), *art* and *action* (technique).

In the concept “personal”, in which the term ‘*being*’ is the central reference, it is said that animation should help individuals as people to develop their potential and creativity. This orientation can be articulate, with a ‘*militant*’ intent that sets a relation between “ontological actions” and “principles of power”, rejecting all kinds of prominence given to knowledge and exogenous techniques. This conception, despite being professionalized, produces successful knowledge to serve the ideals of fighting against inequalities.

Art is a “rationalist” attitude in which, through an analysis of the social challenges of its own practice, animation can avoid ending up in reproducing the dominant social relations. Animation is in this sense a “reasonable” liberating attitude (Elloy 1987 in Gillet 2004; 2006).

The third synthesis is provided by OPA (Cartographie des travaux de l’animation socio-culturelle 1990 in Gillet 2006). This working paper locates three successive stages in the evolution of the concept of animation:

The phase of “*ideological definitions*” considered as stage one, is based on a humanist philosophy that takes as its reference the value and the extent of “freedom”. Animation is then a share, a pedagogy that allows individuals to be aware of their freedom. This approach has three key directions: a) one near the popular tradition of pedagogy, which is the continuation of rationalist philosophers from the Age of Enlightenment, with the ideals of the French Revolution and the theorists of republicanism with the purpose of “increasing the number of enlightened people” and associated with the “possession of the major language resonance, aesthetic and economic issues” which will participate in the necessary democratic and social transformation; b) related to Durkheim’s sociological perspective, it sees animation as a

functioning practice to “unlock social communications” and, therefore, has the role of adapting to new forms of social life; and c) the third direction would be well articulated as a vision closer to Marxism and the class struggle, in which animation is conceivable only from a perspective of increased political awareness with a view to total liberation, towards the radical transformation of economic structures and policies, rejecting any kind of social control in the service of a dominant culture, alienating and oppressing the dominated and exploited classes.

The phase of “*functional definition*” is the stage of maturation of the first definitions that gives preference to the “means” to achieve “goals”. Animation at this stage has become a real complex and multifaceted system through its agents and institutions, with planned projects, goals, means, procedures and methodologies of intervention accordingly.

The phase of “*professional definitions*” started in the 1980s and lasted up to the 1990s, the era of “capitalism at its peak”, as Cotta (in Gillet 2006) states. This is the phase in which partnerships are developing “structures closer to company production structures and clustering together”. For animators, issues of professionalism and professional qualifications are unaffected, the profiles of jobs are diversified and specialization becomes more important. This restructuring articulates the two axes of intersection: “the first is based on what is going from commercial to commercial, and the second running from social to cultural”, with four poles, “a non commercial pole” (which searches the relationship between individuals and the domain of everyday life), “a commercial pole” (which seeks to analyze business practices, technology and advice), “a social pole” (which refers to the action of an economic territory and pedagogy) and “a cultural pole” (related to the general cultural level and the globalization of culture) (Gillet 2006, 33–44.).

3.5. The theory of socio-cultural animation

Socio-cultural animation (SCA) as a theoretical approach is seen as a struggle for people’s emancipation, as a process of social valorisation and strengthening of democracy in which the participation of individuals is important and obligatory, aiming at achieving the objective world, the social world, and the subjective world of the

subject. Using dialogue and communicative action, SCA gives potential to the subject to analyze, in its context, the experiences in relation to his/her circumstances and to other people's circumstances, giving the prospect for the subject to achieve a conscience of his/her historic destiny and the emergence of solidarity from the collective commitment (Freire 1983; 1988).

SCA contributes to the establishment of new ways of thinking and new perspectives of utopia, and contributes to the renewal of organizational principles in a society. As science in practice, it is divided into two models which are: *consummator* and *abstract*.

The “*consummatory*” model is animation presented to individuals and groups in order to consume products (including products for educational purposes), reducing them to passive actors, consuming products that can also be used in destroying them. This model reduces animation to its use value, emphasizing activity, agent, programme, institution, socialization, consensus, and practice (Gillet 2006; 2001; Ander-Egg 1997).

“*Abstract animation*” has an exchange value and can be a place of creation, transfer of symbolic values, guiding one to abstract questions about society. This model emphasizes action, the actor, the project, the establishment, sociability, conflict, and praxis (Gillet 2006; 2001).

These two models are situated in two different sociological perspectives, the first as the sociology of consensus and the second as the sociology of conflict. In this sense, the actor's priority is to analyze the social context, using the subject autonomy and the communicative action in communities, involving a project that finds, in socio-cultural animation, the spindle conductor of socio-cultural transformation.

What gives meaning to situations of animation, and overcomes the split between the functionalist analysis and the hermeneutic analysis, is the need to substitute concept issues with its purpose, which is the ability to make strategic change more or less significant. This is what seems to be one of the core objectives of leadership training: the acquisition of analysis capacity and understanding of double or multiple policy templates, which in the professional field may cross, oppose or ally. The ‘animator’ becomes a strategist in the sense that s/he is able to combine, which means to collect, calculate, and organize.

A professional animation must address its territory as a space where actors confront, with logic of action to play in a network of constraints and resources (Gillet 2001).

The discourse and practice of SCA revolves around the theoretical approaches of two paradigmatic positions: the *technological/rationalistic* paradigm, also known as the positivistic or quantitative paradigm and the *hermeneutical/phenomenological* paradigm, also known as the humanist or qualitative paradigm.

The technological/rationalistic paradigm sees social reality as objective and external, its conceptualization of culture being basically patrimonial and vertical. In this sense it can be called cultural engineering. It emphasizes the role of technicians and members of a group or community in predicting and controlling reality. Intervention is mainly based on a vertically downward perspective, not taking community members into consideration (Gillet 2001; Gillet 2006; Larrazábal 1997).

On the other hand, there is the socio-critical paradigm (also called dialectical, emancipating or neo-Marxist), where social reality is seen as dialectic, holistic and complex, defining culture on the grounds of cultural democracy, everything is an ideology and community/group members are responsible for social intervention. Their ideals focus on the commitment for social transformation and emancipation of reality. The strategy for intervention is vertically upward.

The hermeneutical/phenomenological paradigm, which now no longer seems to be part of the discussion, sees social reality as subjective, particular and in permanent change. For this paradigm, the concept of culture is based on the democratization of culture from a horizontal point of view, also seen as cultural education. Those responsible for intervention in this paradigm are the technicians and the members of the community or the group, with the main objective of interpreting and understanding reality as it is in its context (Gillet 2001; 2006; Freire 1983).

It is on the basis of this hermeneutical/phenomenological perspective that the theoretical approach of the present study is designed and defined, where a team work composed by members of a community of street children and staff members of the Child to Child Association (CCA), coordinated by a social worker (researcher), will work to promote changes in the street children's social lives throughout the active participation of the entire team in specifically designed programmes and activities.

3.6. SCA praxeology as research approach

SCA is praxis, meaning that it is a conscious practice and truly intended to cross the borders of theory and practice in a dialectical process, with the main goal of social change. This approach is considered by Gillet (2001; 2006) as praxeologic research practice. For him, SCA praxeologic research practice must integrate contributions from explanatory sociology to give coherence to the studied object and analyze its function, from sympathetic sociology to capture the sense lived by actors (animators in particular), and from interpretive sociology to discover the “hidden” or the meanings beyond these same actors in community life.

From a research perspective, social reality is complex and it rejects generalizations. In SCA, the question of the position of the researcher is not avoidable. If “rationality is the application of consistent principles with the data provided by experience”, as Morin (1981) quoted by Gillet (2001) states, what are the rules that control the thoughts and underlying truth of the researcher? To learn to think his thoughts and its origins is a fundamental requirement for reflexive returns, needs and impulses, the constitutions of nature, the anxieties and ways of reacting to the environment, the strange mixture of multiple and conflicting influences that bombard each thought.

Theory and practice are made up of different objectives: the theory seeks knowledge of the laws of reality and aims at transforming practice. Everything seems to oppose each other, but it attempts at articulating in a praxeologic way, which means that this opposition is not only antagonistic, but complementary. The researcher’s issues and concepts are forged slowly when aiming at dialectically organizing parameters in relation to his objectives.

In other words, praxeology is a strategic intellect, which is meant to understand situations (moving, changing, and unpredictable in part) and act in support, so much “power-share” as “power-resource”. It is as Gillet (2002) says, obviously that the knowledge of action, to be able to give birth to a generation of theoretical status, must pass in a research approach through the mediation of writing, where the gained knowledge is made communicable, giving, in this sense, space to a production of theory.

Concerning the construction of a theory, Gillet (1997) argues that “the construction of a theory can, in no way, be directly derived from practice; it requires a representation,

a re-production in some sort of thought and abstraction (...) which means that a reflexive practice is not equivalent to actual practice (...)” (Gillet 2001; Freire 1983). For him, scientific knowledge is produced by the active subject who experienced the construction of models based on his perceptions of reality “instead of being given by the alleged objectivable phenomena regardless of the subject, as postulated by positivist epistemologies” (Le Moigne 1997 in Gillet 2001).

The analysis by the actor (either in training or in reflective practice) builds competence as a practice of activity with a genuine reorganization of knowledge (deconstruction / reconstruction), which refers to the work of Vygotsky (1978) on the importance of mediation and reflexivity in the construction of knowledge.

The prerequisite for developing a praxeologic theory, is firstly the ability to question its identity and legitimacy, and secondly the capacity to report the truth, specifying the indicators by which the praxeologic size can be evaluated and providing information on the subject of the theory. For a theory to be credible, it is important that it echoes the experiences of those whom it is supposed to analyze and describe. This is "ethical communication", as proposed by J. Habermas (Gillet 2001; 2002; 2004.).

Based on the praxeologic character of SCA, its role is collective and not an attribute that would be reserved for the sole moderator of a group. It is a combination of roles undertaken by all participants in the group, which will enable the role of SCA to be fully implemented. The responsibility is then collective, even if the professional animator has a special role in it at some moments in the life of the group, as a warrantor of common experiences.

Looking at SCA as a group or community-based approach, where participation is its essence, there are functions concerning the way this praxeologic approach addresses group dynamics. Anzieu & Martin (1982) in Gillet (2006, 74) have been the first to opt for the notion of the role of SCA in group dynamics, dividing it into three sub-functions: *the production function*, *the facilitation function* and *the elucidation function*. These three sub-functions are present in every group with the same goal, in permanent interaction, interdependent relationship and inextricably connected with each other (Gillet 2006).

The production function refers to guidelines that influence the group member's activities in connection with their goals and values. This function is concerned with the

action, i.e., the project. The action is the explicit translation of the project, dependent on a social imagination and a certain vision of the world. It is also the moment of speech, of explanation, of exchange of information, of communication and even of conceptualization, of the definition of tasks concerning the activity and the technique to be used. Knowledge and know-how are at stake at this level where operational factors predominate.

The working group exchanges ideas, opinions, criticism, advice or suggestions for the solution of the identified problem. The objectives of this work can be quite varied: physical and intellectual exercise for members of the group, encouraging the expression of all to form social relationships, educating the will of social and collective responsibility, live games or leisure activities, creativity, and so on.

The animator is in contact with audiences with the idea of how to develop animation; this “is what allows individuals and groups, through various activities which imply growth, albeit in microscopic form, its sphere of autonomy, freedom, creativity and expressiveness (...) this is an action that is not measured with the ruler or the meter, but with the quality, more specifically to improving the quality of life that makes it possible” (Gillet 2006, 74–75).

In the production function, the group is the leader of the process and all members are “agents of production” that allow the group to breed, create, make, develop, manufacture, construct, and give birth to new and different insights about social reality.

The facilitation function is linked to the precedent function and is used to facilitate production. It defines the organizational structure of the group, the distribution and articulation of roles, the kind of leadership and power sharing. It is the “socio-operational” asset that contributes to the completion of operational processes as the most favourable (Gillet 2006, 76–77).

The proposition of methods, the clarification of goals and issues that arise from these, the division of tasks, the structure of communications inside the group (networks used, the choice of proceeding discussion and reflection), this whole set of activities is designed to allow the continuation of the internal system of the group (the discipline) to develop its objectives and its work plan. With its partial summary paving the passage of time, it encourages the participation and exchanges of group members in order to organize the different contents for analysis. It also guides the group to better discern the

necessary decisions and conclusions, following the intellectual itinerary, controlling excessive emotions and passions, culminating, if possible, in an agreement.

All together, these aspects orientate the group in organizing, planning, clarifying, coordinating, exchanging and confronting the social reality (Gillet *ibid.*).

The elucidation function is related to the liberation process where there is a search and reflection on feelings, aiming at making human relationships more transparent to allow the cohesion of the group. This feature is sometimes also called “regulation” because it concerns all activities which have as their object the creation of the psychological conditions necessary for the other two functions to be performed.

It is important that individuals can communicate their feelings, their opinions, their perceptions and their motivations, in relation to the task and other members of the group, on aspects that need intervention in order to eliminate possible conflicts, with rules and a process of evaluation of the degree of satisfaction of each member of the group.

Communication is the “grease that allows (...) meaning without too many squeaks”, says Petit (1986) quoted by Gillet (2006, 78) and resolves certain states of tension or any situation of a mental or psychosocial nature that could produce an impediment, an obstacle or restriction (conflicts of age, sex, prestige, power, status, values, anxieties, and pull, projections and identifications).

This awareness, this quest for clarity concerning the emotions and interpersonal relationships and their connection with the activities or actions produced, appears to be a function of elucidation for maintenance, as a permanent assessment process that leads to a gradual maturation, a sort of assessment of the “climate” of the group and the “depressed” and “anti-cyclonic” powers that cross it (Gillet 2006).

The socio-cultural animation praxeology research approach is a set of principles and methods which participates in the foundation of a new way of thinking. It argues for a realistic prospect of utopia or feasibility, contributing to the renewal of the organizing principles of society and the creation of a rich, social, economic and cultural environment of tomorrow, not overlooking the laws of the complexity of societal phenomena.

This approach exists only as practice, the interaction of practice and reflection, which raises the question of the sense of the proposed interest. This means that, in addition to the technical and professional pole lying parallel to the economic (production) function, the facilitation function is related to the ideological aspect, which is, as Gillet (2006, 203) calls it, the “militancy of the animation”, and the pole of the mediation (elucidation function). There is another pole that gives meaning to the wholeness, which entitles the ethical oriented networking that takes into account the solution of the crisis of social ties, local and global, high and low, inside and outside. With vision and strategies that take into account the social, economic and cultural role of the state, the other players can develop processes of influence and legitimacy in the field of politics, without losing sight of the ideals and fundamental values of SCA (Gillet 2006), and this is called the moral or ethical pole.

Next to a world of facts and practice in animation, there is a world of values that we call ethics, the meaning of a philosophical reflection on the ground, where the issues of political and social ties have priority consideration. Rethinking the subject of relations between professionalism and activism, between knowledge and action, between theory and practice, means raising the question of truth through ethics” (Gillet 2006, 205–209.). Animation is thus at the heart of the challenges of defining democracy, the relationship between knowledge and belief (among technical and ethical concerns).

For the purpose of this study, SCA praxeology research approach is used as a continuous and participative research practice. One important element is that this theory of praxis presents its weakness in the sense that it overlooks the influence of the structural and environment powers on human behaviour; this means that it is very difficult to influence the participation of individuals without seeing how the political and structural elements influence people’s behaviour at a local level.

In summary, SCA is a planned action on the basis of the analysis of contexts and situations, translated into a series of intentional activities or practices, embodied in a specific action project to take place at a specific environment, in a territorially-defined community (in this case the street children communities) and is based on the participation of groups, individuals or community members (street children, street groups, families, etc.).

It is on this basis that SCA praxeology is oriented to social change, and it is a conscious process itself, which seeks to reconcile theory and practice in a circular and dialectical process, in continuous interaction and creativity, transforming research into praxeology, which means the movement back and forth between experience, practice and thought.

Praxeology in this sense means the process of knowledge production through a dialectic relation of thought and practice. In this process, theory is seen as a system of rules, procedures, abstract knowledge or reasoning produced through permanent reflection of social reality alongside the past (history), the present (actual actions) and the future (realistic utopias) with the ultimate aim of social transformation.

The next chapter addresses SCA participatory action research as a methodological tool of fieldwork research practice based on the theoretical reflections addressed so far.

Chapter 4 : SCA as participatory action research

"The future isn't something hidden in a corner. The future is something we build in the present." Paulo Freire

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical foundations of SCA praxeology as a designed process to act on and in the community, where the relationship between the researcher/social worker (seen as animator) and the community in which s/he works is not based on top/down practices nor on bottom/up relationships, but on horizontal relations, where technicians and community members work together to promote social change and transform social reality. In this relationship, community members are the principal actors of all processes taking place, because SCA praxeology gives priority to active participation to act *in* and *from* the community. It is an educational practice where action appears with the basic principles that define the transformation, development, social and cultural change to improve the community.

Kurki (2000a) affirms that SCA is always action research itself. According to her, SCA aims at pedagogical, social and cultural development, since they (the participants in the research process) intend to achieve change and start from the problems that members of the research group experience and feel in their lives. The community members function as active researchers in all stages of the research process, first defining the problems, and then setting objectives, planning stages of research and action, and finally assessing the results.

In this chapter, the aim is to describe SCA participatory action research in social work practice. My interest is to clarify the special characteristics this approach has as a methodology of action research. This chapter is necessary to clarify the general methodological parameters of SCA as a research approach.

There are many different types of research processes. The differences between research processes are related to the paradigmatic position the research and researcher stand for.

The paradigm presents the researcher with a specific theory that may be suitable for the study s/he is doing, and it determines the methodological design and method choices of any research practice.

In the case of this study, the SCA methodology setting is deeply influenced by the hermeneutic-humanist paradigm which permeates my way of seeing and understanding the world, where humans are fully capable of their own social and cultural development within history.

My emphasis is on how people's own sense of self exists, and how they experience the world, the 'meaning' they put on their experiences and life. I believe that human beings can choose their own life and are able to define their goals; they have actualizing potential to produce social reality, and they are not mere objects of outer or inner forces. The most paramount hermeneutic-humanist perspective concerns are related to human freedom, which is deeply influenced by Paulo Freire's humanistic position.

Freire's *humanistic* position opposes both the trend and the attempts to incorporate deliberative and communicative action in a particular and distinctive role of individuals to producing culture and history and provide solutions to their social problems in a specific context. Freire's positions stress that what is critically important is that humans are culturally and historically produced by their own actions (Freire 1994a).

The remainder of this chapter is structured into four sections. Section 1 discusses general assumptions of action research. In this section I present a general definition of action research, its basic characteristics and types of action research. Section 2 discusses SCA as participatory action research, later on presenting the main characteristics of SCA, its general phases and the research methods of SCA participatory action research. Section 3 establishes in brief the combination between SCA and ethnographic research practice, and Section 4 summarizes the content discussed in this chapter so far.

4.2. Action research: origins and definitions

4.2.1. Origins of action research

Recently, there has been growing interest in action research practices as important elements of promoting local development in different fields of social sciences. However, within different frameworks of social research, there has also been an overloading of definitions of what is or should be (or should not be) action research. These definitions are concerned with action research as a scientific method that produces real science or not. This discussion is as old as the origins of action research as a methodological tool of social research, and in this paper I will not participate in the discussion, and my interest will concentrate on briefly discussing on the origins and definitions of action research as such in general, without profoundly reflecting on it since that it is not the main purpose of this study.

According to Masters (1995), the origins of action research are unclear within the literature. He quotes authors such as Kemmis & McTaggart (1990), Zuber-Skerrit (1992), Holter & Schwartz-Barcott (1993), who state that action research originated with the American psychologist Kurt Lewin.

However, McKernan (1991), quoted by Masters (1995), argues that there is evidence of the use of action research by a number of social reformists prior to Lewin, such as Collier in 1945, Lippitt & Radke in 1946, and Corey in 1953. McTaggart (1992) cites the work of Gestettner, Altricher and the physician Moreno, who used group participation in 1913 for a community development initiative with prostitutes in Vienna. In the same position, Freideres (1992) asserts that the concept of participatory research emerged in the 1970s from development work in low income countries and mentions names such as Fals-Borda & Freideres (Masters 1995.).

On the other hand, as McFarland & Stansell (1993, 14) mention, “Lewin is credited with coining the term ‘action research’ to describe the work that did not separate investigation from action needed to solve the problem”. This position is confirmed by Wilkinson (1996) when he says that “Lewin valued action research as a way of learning about organizations through his efforts trying to change them, to make them more responsive to employee’s needs. He saw action research as a way to strengthen democratic principles in the unsettled years after World War II, and this connection of

action research with equality and justice has continued as the methodology has developed” (Wilkinson 1996, 216).

The association of action research with societal change has been both its strength and weakness. Researchers who supported the methodology saw it as an important tool to study people and organizations in suppressed or under-represented communities with the goal of encouraging liberationist perspectives (Borda 2001.).

This research approach was not without criticism. It is criticized for its lack of rigour in following established basic research methods, and for the lack of impartiality shown by researchers who were communicating regularly with their research subjects during the projects. The “context-bound” nature of action research also prompted criticism, as this type of research is deeply embedded in a certain situation and produces results which cannot be repeated (Baskerville & Wood- Harper 1996).

4.2.2. Definitions of action research

It is very difficult to give a universal definition of action research due to its different applications and the epistemological positions of its users. As Masters (1995) says, there are many definitions of action research. Three of these definitions are:

- a) A “systemic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by participants in the inquiry” (McCutcheon & Jung 1990 in Masters 1995).
- b) A “form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and situations in which these practices are carried out” (Kemmis & McTaggart 1990, 5).
- c) “action research aims to contribute both to practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework” (McKernan 1991 in Masters 1995).

In all these definitions, it is a patent fact that action research aims to integrate theory and practice by *working with* people rather than *working for* people, highlighting the need for social research to be focused on developing practical outcomes as a response to people's needs and interests, instead of defining theoretical positions with empty outcomes.

One important characteristic of action research is its distance to universal truth and generalizable results. Action research is based on the everyday life of practitioners, and aims at experiencing the real context in which these actions take place. It is the combination of theory and practice in hermeneutic relationships.

Three minimal requirements for an action research project are:

- a) "The project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a strategic action susceptible to improvement;
- b) the project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these activities being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated; and
- c) the project involves those responsible for the practice in each of the moments of the activity, widening participation in the project gradually to include others affected by the practice and maintaining collaborative control of the process" (Grundy 1988 quoted by Masters 1995).

4.3. SCA as participatory action research

Broncano & Rojo in Quintana (1992, 72–74) quoting Ander-Egg (1981) define SCA as "a set of social skills that, based on a participatory pedagogy, is designed to operate in different fields of development of quality of life, to promote the participation of people in their own cultural development process".

This assumption suggests a pedagogical methodology, a set of elements, techniques, tools, systems planning and evaluation, programming content and times, activities, etc. in order to promote an intervention in which participation is the most paramount.

Ander-Egg (1997) presents several elements to describe the methodological scope of SCA as a research method. According to him, SCA methodology settings depend on the scope of intervention which can depend on the sector in which action is emphasized, depend on the context and scope (*institutional* - animation in a classroom, culture club, retired pensioner's home, neighbourhood association, youth club, etc.; *technical background* - animation as theatre, recreation, sports, music, dance, etc.; *social context* - animation with youngsters, immigrants, farmers, and so on; *the space* - animation in a street, a village, town, and so on; *political background* - animation for achieving certain objectives, such as claim of rights, action, etc.), depend on the geographical settings (urban, suburban, rural, national, etc.), and depend on the population and age (gender, age, location, activities, etc.).

In the same way, Kurki (2000a) mentions that, from a methodological point of view, praxis stems from the ideological and methodological framework, and there are many different areas in which practical actions may take place, such as animation connected to culture, to education, sports, communal activities, leisure-time, entrepreneurial activities, etc.

In addition, Merino (1997) states that action research is a realization of SCA research; it involves a breakthrough in the quest for methodological rigour for the community and group participation as subjects and not as an object in the study itself, in its location, its problems and its destination, and the same group leads the process of seeking solutions to problems that concern them, from their own action and reflection on it in order to improve or transform it.

In this study, I address the application of SCA participatory action research with street children. The task of socio-cultural animation in this approach belongs to *urban community work* (street children living in small communities in urban areas, in this case the city of Maputo in Mozambique), with an essentially socio-educational purpose and is conducted with street children and their families, community members and local leaders. The main content is *social, educational and cultural*, with community groups, and the activities are implemented by a group of street children, a facilitator and street educators from the Child to Child Association, the hosting institution of the fieldwork research practice.

Taking into consideration that SCA is participatory action research itself, it does not exist without practice, and it happens within and throughout practice. SCA can not be seen as a separate element of theory and praxis (Gillet 1994 in Kurki 2009). It consists of a moral and ethical commitment which starts with cooperation and aims at improving social reality. It is hoped that those who participate in the study will be able to critically evaluate their own reality.

Kurki (2000a) argues that SCA as a whole thus has a theoretical-ideological foundation, and from these foundations emerges its methodology, leading to the actual methods of activity, and the starting point in the praxis of SCA is to know the reality in which action is to take place, analysing, interpreting and viewing this reality from different perspectives in order to understand it better.

Knowing the reality takes place with the participation of participants in the action to be implemented, meaning that the only true source of knowledge is people's own social activity and their commitment to understand it and change it according to their perception of the social problems being faced. That is why SCA praxeology is participatory action research itself.

Participation is the heart of SCA methods, and it takes place within three important steps mentioned by Stringer (1999) and Robson (2002), namely: a) researchers observe the situation carefully, working with those at the research location to define and describe the problem to be investigated, along with a description of the environment or context of the problem; b) participants (the researchers and the community) analyze and interpret the situation to deepen their understanding of the background and extent of the problem, and also to identify other players who may be implicated. A general review of the literature may be carried out at this step, and c) participants plan an action that will lead to resolving the problem; they then carry out the action, and evaluate the results in order to assess whether the action led to the resolution of the problem. (Stringer 1999; Robson 2002)

Ander- Egg (1997) confirms this statement when he affirms that animation can be seen as forms of social, educational and cultural actions and as a methodology of action if it finds processes of participation in all those involved. Its goal is to generate participation and responsibility.

“Participation is what makes Socio-cultural Animation deeper. However, it should be noted that participation is a goal to achieve. In other words, participation is not a point of departure as something that is accomplished by simply saying, it is a point of arrival, which presupposes a process or a way to go” (Ander-Egg 1997, 21–27.).

Ander-Egg (1997) states that the goal of SCA is to promote the participation of people and its methodology must be consistent and derived from this, or should be participatory. Although this seems obvious, given the inconsistencies that often exist in practice, we must point out the need for a consistent methodology with its objectives, and this is not incidental, but substantial. The way it works should be imbued with a spirit and participatory style.

However, the search for a participatory approach recalls the Freirean principles of full human subjects, which means that individuals have the capacity for reflection, for conceptualizing, for critical thinking, for making decisions, for planning social change according to their contextual reality, and this capacity is not merely based on awareness, which is an important element indeed. For Freire (1983), action and reflection are organically integrated; this dialectical and *emancipatory* process of action and reflection constitutes what he calls “the process of *conscientization*”, meaning breaking through prevailing mythologies to reach new levels of awareness, in particular, awareness of oppression, of being an object in a world where only subjects have power (Freire 1983; Ander-Egg 1997)

The process of conscientization comes from Freire’s rejection of what he calls “banking education”, which emphasizes the teacher’s role as the most important and active in teacher-student relationships. For him, this is an anti-dialogical approach which serves the teacher (oppressor) by denying the students (oppressed) an active role in the learning process and thus promotes exploitation in the society. Instead of banking methods, progressive educators employ problem-posing methods. “In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (Freire 1988, 64).

For Freire, in order to have the learner moving from *object* to *subject*, he or she needs to be involved in dialogical action with the teacher and thus develop the process of conscientization. This dialogical action is based on two dimensions; reflection and

action, where both elements combined are what he calls “praxis”. For him, action without reflection is *activism* (doing things without reflecting on them; there is no commitment and consequently no transformation), and reflection without action is *verbalism* (empty words which do not produce any change or transformation in people’s lives) (Freire 1988).

Freire also states that for true dialogical action to take place it is necessary to have love for people, humility and faith in people’s capacity for transformation. It is impossible to develop dialogical action if one is seen as superior to others or is seen as the possessor of the truth or knowledge. “*Faith* is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue. Dialogue is founded upon love, humility and faith; and it becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence” (Freire 1988, 71).

Dialogical action is, in this sense, a process by which actors give and take ideas, they share knowledge, experiences, practices, etc., trusting and loving each other, without hierarchies or social positions in which one is superior to the other, or one knows more than the others. In this context all the participants are engaged in the same level of social interactions, they respect each other, they have the same rights and possibilities to give their opinion and be heard. Dialogical action is deep cooperation, where subjects (the participants in the process) are able to “focus their attention on the reality which mediates them and which challenges them (the problem). The response to that challenge is the action of dialogical subjects, upon a reality in order to transform it” (ibid, 149).

Freire’s philosophy of education is not a simple method but rather an organic political consciousness. The domination of some by others must be overcome, in his view, so that the humanization of all can take place. Authoritarian forms of education, in serving to reinforce the oppressors’ view of the world, and their material privilege in it, constitute an obstacle to the liberation of human beings. The means of this liberation is *praxis*, or process of action and reflection, which simultaneously names reality and acts to change it. Freire criticized views that emphasized either the objective or subjective aspect of social transformation, and insisted that revolutionary change takes place precisely through the consistency of a critical commitment in both word and deed.

This dialectical unity is expressed in his formulation, “to speak a true word is to transform the world” (Freire 1996, 68; 1994a).

According to Freire, the fundamentally defining ontological feature of human being is that people produce history and culture, even as history and culture produce them, and thus both the theory and application of education as a practice of freedom “take the people’s historicity as their starting point” (Freire 1994a, 65). The dialectical interplay between existence and context reveals that any given situation, including one’s identity and self-understanding, is not a necessity. Situations and identities congeal in the course of time under the pressure of history and culture, but most importantly also under the influence of human action, and they are thus susceptible to human intervention, to the power of freedom. The ontological truth of historicity thus, not only defines human nature for Freire, but also gives grounds for his theory of liberation and provides the opening for concrete efforts to transform oppressive realities.

The practice of freedom, as a critical *reflexive* praxis, must grasp the outward direction, meaning, and consequences of action, and also its inward meaning as the realization and articulation of a self. Therefore, education as a practice of freedom must include a kind of historic-cultural, political psychoanalysis that reveals the *formation* of the *self* and its *situation* in all its dynamic and dialectical relations. People then become critically conscious of themselves as the very sorts of creatures that produce (and are produced by) their culture and history, and to realize their freedom they become engaged in liberatory acts that challenge the limits (internal and external) of particular situations that maintain oppression or injustice. Human freedom is not outside particular situations but is geared to them. While the context “programmes” people to see and experience their situation in a particular way, it does not “determine” how people are or can be (Freire 1994b, 98).

These propositions are the essence of SCA participatory action research, where an *egalitarian* research practice based on common striving towards awareness of reality and towards self-awareness takes place. It is an *educational process* in which there are no differences between educators and educated, animators and animated, and their roles constantly are reversed, and the common search unites all those engaged in the endeavour.

In this sense, SCA participatory action research is seen as a research practice that immerses the exogenous "researcher" in the setting on an equal basis, considering the necessary trust and attitudes as well as cultural differences, bringing together the need for humanhood, love, respect, care, critical thinking, people's emancipation and hope for social transformation of the reality.

Referring to this fact, Ander-Egg (1997, 102) states that SCA "being a participatory approach is flexible and adaptive". That means that each specific application adapts and recreates itself in the light of the changed situation. It offers alternative ways, according to the interventions and contributions of the same people, their interests and concerns, their struggles and abilities, their weaknesses and limitations, adjusting and taking into account the changes that happen in the reality where the programme is being implemented.

Similarly, Merino (1997) when discussing the epistemological, historical and functional set ups of SCA, he states that it is composed by:

1. "a dynamic conception of man and society;
2. individuals and groups responsible and committed to being active agents in the group itself, in the definition, design and management of their own community and the interests, problems and aspirations of the same; and
3. technology as enabling participation and guaranteeing the above aspects and adjusting them to each case". (Merino 1997, 92–94)

That is why SCA "implies a philosophy of life, a conception of society and the human being. At the same time, it is a way of life, of being, of living and of doing, characterized by a society's outline in which every person is the agent of his destiny and of his group, which means that each individual is a part of his community.

SCA is a way of being active and transformative, of having a set of strategies, methods and active and transformative practices, always developed by the group with or without the help of specialists. In any case, the group involved has to be the responsible agent. Animation is a social ideology that defends individuals and groups in the construction of their culture and their citizenship, from their own initiative, territory and community" (Merino 1997, 93–106).

4.4. General steps in the implementation of SCA as participatory action research

SCA is, as stated before, a methodology that provides a set of lines to follow in order to produce social change. It is important to always keep in mind that there is no perfect methodology and there is no unique and only one method of SCA practice. However, some general guidelines are addressed by different socio-cultural animators, such as Quintana (1992), Ander-Egg (1997; 2003), Merino (1997), and Gunturiz (1992), among others, as being very important in all SCA intervention projects.

As Gunturiz (1992, 156–200) affirms that “the methodology and practice that comes as a systematic and contextualized approach and works in communities do not support the establishment of an ideal model of action, which applies to all types of communities. In other words, SCA does not present a model of action for a detailed and comprehensive sector of reality in which we work with people. This does not mean, moreover, that SCA leaves the process ‘in the air’ to adopt a circumstantial sense, but it must be planned on the basis of each case, in the community context in which it is intended to act”.

Most social animators such as Merino (1997), Jaume Trilla (1997), Gunturiz (1992) among others, have a consensus that SCA programmes help to create and develop processes, conditions, structures, strategies and methodologies: to wake up and develop individual sovereignty and maturity together with the other, articulated in a joint project; to learn how to find, share, and decide to work in groups, in short, learning to live with others; to learn how to resolve conflicts through dialogue and agreement; to learn how to take decisions in a group; and to create groups of processes and task forces.

Freirean humanist thinking addresses the basic grounds of SCA methodology where the need to understand individuals in their real contexts and their participation in the process of creating solutions for their liberation are the most paramount.

For this matter, Freire presents three basic steps for social intervention in order to promote a liberatory practice which is the esteem of the SCA methodological setting:

- the critical analysis of the real world and actuality;
- the hermeneutic reading and understanding of that analysis and the reality and the creation of a utopia; and
- the search for practical tools towards the slow path for a better tomorrow and future (See Freire 1994a; 1994b.).

Most social animators, such as those mentioned above, agree that the basic elements of a SCA intervention project and methodological processes involve considerations related to Freire's methodological tools and practices, which are embedded in the three general phases of SCA research process as described in the next section.

4.4.1. Phase 1: The critical analysis of the real world and actuality

This stage implies that many specific tasks need to be addressed. Quintana (1992) presents three stages that have to be followed at this phase of a research process, they are:

- a) Knowledge of the physical and social environment related to the field situation, everyday human relationships and the dominant conflicting values in the community, among others;
- b) Opening of dialogue and establishment of channels of information / communication, which involves locating centres of social activity, identification of leaders or people with significant social roles, informal interviews with the greatest possible number of members of the community, dissemination of ideas programme and projects, among others;
- c) Identification of needs and expectations of the community in any field: work, family, educational, cultural, etc., which involves the formulation of needs and expectations, selection of needs / immediate interests and collection of initiatives, among others.

Here the participant observation, interviews (group focused and individual) and surveys and questionnaires are considered the most appropriate methods of intervention in order to understand social reality as such.

4.4.2. Phase 2: The hermeneutic reading and understanding of that analysis of reality and the creation of a utopia.

This phase recalls the need of contextualizing the social reality. By hermeneutic reading, Freire (1994a) means the process in which the educator, social worker or social researcher goes back to both the meaningful behaviour of individuals, and the situation in which social settings are created or adapted. This implies the use of different sources from which s/he (researcher) can derive the meanings that are attached to the community, and on the basis of which s/he (researcher) will be able to acquire knowledge on contextual factors that influence certain patterns of behaviour based on local values.

For this purpose, the researcher needs to revisit documents related to this reality and make use of the participant observations and interviews to gather more information on the phenomenon s/he is studying. This allows the researcher to understand the reality based on contextual grounds.

In order to create what Freire (1983; 1994a) calls utopia or what Gillet (2006) calls realistic utopias (seen as possible solutions to the problem), there is another important stage to be observed in this phase of SCA participatory action research, namely the establishment of a plan.

Broncano & Álvarez Rojo in Quintana (1992, 73–93) make allusion to some basic principles to follow when planning an intervention project under the grounds of SCA such as:

- a) “The need to respect the autonomy of each participant, the free expression of their values and views; therefore, planning and developing will be the product of dialogue and compromise among the participants;
- b) The planning must be voluntary, open to anyone, whatever their status, age or gender; there are no preconditions or predetermined times as a result; activities, objectives and methods for achieving it vary in the course of its development depending on predictable factors, such as dropouts, the new contributions from people who started the process, new material resources that are available, and so on;

- c) The plan is based on active participation and commitment of all involved, but there are varying degrees of commitment and participation, all equally worthy of respect, which necessarily involves diverse forms of participation whose foresight in planning and development, is impossible. Moreover, the achievement of higher levels of commitment can become a goal of a socio-cultural project; and
- d) Socio-cultural animation does not use exclusion nor dirigisme in all cultural and any assigned roles of authority in the organization or unit”.

When these basic requirements are met, the animator, playing a role of facilitator and mediator, will together with the community members design the intervention plan by initially returning the systematized information gathered in the first phase and stimulate dialogue among stakeholders on what can be initiated. Then they (researcher and community members) will define the purpose of this action, the analysis of its rationale, the allocation of functions, tasks and activities to take place, methods of action that can be used, and the necessary human and material resources, and the time to be used, and so on.

So in this planning process, the following questions will be answered as Ander-Egg (1997) quoted by Kurki (2000a) proposed as some important methodological questions:

- à “WHAT do we want to do, or what is the nature of the project to be carried out?
- à WHY do we want to do it, or what are the project’s justifications?
- à WHY IS IT BEING DONE, or what are the action’s objectives?
- à HOW MUCH is to be done, i.e., what are the project’s specific objectives and intermediate goals?
- à WHERE do we want to do it, or what is the physical location of the action (always starting from “where the people are”: school, library, park, street)?
- à HOW do we want to do it, or what are the activities and methods to be used?
- à WHEN is to be done, or defining the schedule (activities usually take place during people’s free time. It is also necessary to plan a more specific timetable: once a day, once a week, or during weekends.

- à WHO will be “targeted” by the action, or who are the target groups (parents, municipality, hospitals, members of the community from where the street children come, degree of participation, etc.)? [Also with this question it is necessary to ask who does what in order to make a redistribution of tasks according to the activities we give to each working team].
- à Who will be doing it, or what are the human resources (person in charge, animators, authorities, volunteers)?” (Kurki 2000a)

By answering these questions, several elements will come up for the implementation process such as the definition of the working team, the distribution of tasks and responsibilities, the definition of the timetable and places of intervention and so on. In this phase, literature review, participant observations and interviews are used as the principal methods to produce the research data.

4.4.3. Phase 3: The search for practical tools along the slow path for a better tomorrow and a better future

This phase can also be called the intervention itself, because the process of hunting for solutions implies the implementation of the planned actions in the previous phase. For this purpose, the three stages are here recalled as follows:

a) The intervention

Intervention is a result of a good plan. However, this does not mean that the intervention process will follow a strict intervention plan designed a priori. The planning process in SCA is flexible and takes into consideration the contextual changes of social reality. That is why it needs a permanent dialogical relation between the working team members and the community.

b) The evaluation

One important thing is to remember that evaluation is not the last task of a SCA intervention plan; it takes place in all stages of activities. This is a continuous and formative evaluation, in which all members of the working team participate.

However, as Arnanz (1988) mentions, even if this evaluation takes place periodically in order to see how activities take place, it is important to provide sufficient time for a final evaluation of the programme, and three aspects should be evaluated: firstly the working team as a group (its organization and functioning); secondly the distribution of the tasks and the timetable; and thirdly the acceptance of the timetable and the designated activities by each working team member.

The objective is not to judge the team members, but to see what can be changed, strengthened, developed, and so forth, in future intervention plans.

c) The celebration

According to Arnanz (1988, 42), “a human space, a human reality where there is no possibility to celebrate anything, where there is no space for a party..., it is a space for the dead”. This may appear strange, but researchers do not usually even think of celebrating as an integral part of a research process, making their activities both stressful and monotonous.

But as mentioned before, in SCA research practice the process is not held by the researcher alone, but by the entire group, with the participation of the community in general, including other institutions that might have participated in the process. So it is worth celebrating what has been done by the team, the community and other partners. Celebrating is also a part of educating human values and strengthening social relations in order to make the results of the action last longer.

So celebration plays an important role in any action research project; it has a very important pedagogical and human power (Arnanz 1988).

These phases of implementation of SCA participatory action research, which Ander-Egg (1982) quoted by Merino (1997, 276) calls “core proceeding” should not be seen as a rigid sequence of stages compartmentalized, but rather as a guide to operating and adapting to the dynamics of social reality where it is necessary to think interactively.

The method “is not a magic wand, or a formula, but a series of actions that actually applies to a specific deadline and a specific purpose. These guidelines, which are methods, are not alien to the underlying or explicit ideology, the theoretical framework,

the design that takes social work and the interpretation of reality and the process of change” (Ander-Egg 1982 in Merino1997, 277).

4.5. SCA praxeology and ethnographic approach

As Gillet (2006, 12–14; 2001) states, a socio-cultural animation praxeological perspective is a philosophy of praxis providing a deep relationship between thought and reality, theory and action: as a conscious process that seeks to reconcile theory and practice in a circular and dialectical process, in continuous interaction and creativity, a movement back and forth between experience, practice and thought. It is, over all, a multidimensional approach in research practice, meaning that it combines diverse research perspectives.

The multidimensionality of SCA participatory action research from the methodological point of view can bring several questions regarding the frontiers of SCA with other methodological tools. Some could ask “what makes SCA different from other methodologies, what is the peculiarity of such an approach?”

This is a discussion that occurs between all other methodological approaches and scientific disciplines. I would like to make clear that there are no full and satisfying answers for all.

I think that all methodologies have a philosophical and deontological setting that makes them epistemologically stable and their differences come from this. For instance, SCA participatory action research is in many cases confused with solely ethnographic methodology due to its use of many features of this approach. But still there are deep differences between these two approaches.

SCA is not ethnography even though it makes use of some and many important features of ethnography, and it should not be considered as such; it is a multi-featured methodology with cross-methodological settings.

In this study I use most central elements of traditional ethnography¹⁵ because it enables me to elicit information from the street children communities and their social landscapes, and the Child to Child Association (CCA¹⁶) work environment within their social context.

My cultural background was of immense importance in this study, since my origin is similar to that of the entire research team (street children and the CCA staff) who participated in the research process. Associated with this factor are the past research practices on the same topic: during my Master's degree my interest was on understanding street children's social life, challenges and prospects, emphasizing my approach concerning the reasons why children become street children. These background elements made the research practice much more directed to practice, and very little attention was given to processes of the social immersion of the researcher in the research site to ensure a better cultural understanding of the environment, as is common in most ethnographic research practices.

In previous periods, I have also established contacts with the CCA, the hosting practice site for many Finnish exchange students, where I acted as tutor for these exchange students, besides the fact that most of the CCA staff team are my personal friends.

Ethnography is, indeed, seen as a research perspective which focuses on fieldwork with the application of participatory observations and open interviews, where the fieldwork is seen as the main feature (Nisula 1994, 1996). However, ethnography is defined as a research process and a textual product (Van Maanen 1995), a position shared by Muecke (1994) for whom ethnography is not a method but a product. On the other hand, Atkinson (1990) considers ethnography a scientific genre, a scientific style of its own, and Atkinson et al (2008) mention that it is founded on a commitment to understand everyday life in a given social world through a sustained engagement with that world.

¹⁵ Etymologically seen as: *ethnos*=people, race; *grafia*=writing, description; it is defined as a process through which models of culture or subculture are observed, described, documented and analyzed (Pelto & Pelto 1978; Agar 1980).

¹⁶ The name of the hosting institution for this research has been changed due to ethical concerns.

Koester (1995, 85–86) mentions that “ethnography is a particular qualitative research tradition aimed at describing a human group. The term refers to both the methodology used to achieve that description as well as the description itself. Participant observation is another term for the methodology used to accomplish ethnography. Participant observation is at the heart of ethnography; it implies that researchers immerse themselves in the daily lives of the people being studied, so that the researcher can gain an insider’s or emic perspective of their subjects’ lives.

Koester (ibid) goes further by arguing that “ethnographic methods refer to the various research techniques that accompany participant observation, including fieldwork, observation, and a variety of interviewing approaches aimed at promoting discussion and eliciting information. Combining different methods to examine a phenomenon (triangulation) enables ethnographers to increase their understanding and confirm their interpretations (cross-validation). It should be noted that while these methods are integral components of ethnographic research, they are not the only source of data used to produce ethnography. Many other research methods are frequently applied, including survey instruments and archival research” (Koester 1995, 85–86; Pink 2001.).

As mentioned here, the ethnography’s main goal is to describe and understand a certain phenomena using several other artefacts to achieve this goal. This is where I find the difference between SCA action research practice and ethnography¹⁷, because the main aim of SCA research practice is to promote participation for social change by establishing relationships and promoting consciousness in people’s lives. It does not solely describe people’s social and societal settings; it goes beyond the description, from social understandings to processes of the construction of social relations, from social relations to action for change, from social relations to consciousness and democratic action, to emancipation and active participation. In this research practice, the researcher is not solely a researcher who observes social reality; s/he is part of an entire complex system of social relations.

¹⁷ It is important to mention that there are of course many different forms of ethnography which do not solely focus on observing and describing the social reality. However, the definition used here is that of the traditional ethnographic approach. For other types of ethnography, refer to Britzman (2000); Carspecken (2001) and Trueba (1999)

The fieldwork was a combination of the researcher's¹⁸ actions (through active participation in planning, designing and implementation of activities with the working team), direct observation, listening to each member's contributions and opinions, asking questions about the proposals each one had presented or would like to present, writing field notes, participating actively in all activities that we as a group have designed, sharing ideas and experiences on similar situations with the group and establishing relations between the research team and other contexts of interaction.

In general my role during the fieldwork practice was that of a facilitator, with the main goal of creating communication, contact, establishing relationships and commitments, promoting dialogues, questioning solutions to encountered problems and difficulties, giving contributions to the group positions and analyzing the reactions of the team members. In all activities, all members gave their contribution, and defined plans, priorities, objectives and strategies to provide solutions to a certain situation, with the main goal of promoting participation and self-awareness (Kurki 2000a; Freire 1983; Ander-Egg 1997; Quintana 1992).

The writing of such a SCA praxeologic fieldwork report with profound ethnographic sensitivity consisted of describing processes of interactions and activities in the context in which it took place (See Pelto & Pelto 1978; Hammersley & Atkinson 1996; Werner & Schoepfle 1986.). However, I gave little attention to the need to describe social landscapes, scenarios or characteristics of places and people, but paid much attention to people's reactions and participations on the processes taking place.

While writing this study, I did not come across any real example of the application of socio-cultural animation as a research practice with street children in Africa and Mozambique. Nevertheless, this approach is part of the everyday practicality in many child intervention programmes and projects in Brazil, Spain, France and many other places in Latin America.

A good example of this is the 'Projecto Axê' in Salvador, Brazil (Rynänen 2009) where animation is used as an emancipatory practice with street children. In Spain, for instance, several projects with prisoners are run by the Centro de Iniciativas para la

¹⁸ Considered as social worker during the fieldwork report. This expression refers to me as a member of the working team.

Cooperación Batá (CIC Batá 2008) with farming cooperatives, such as the ‘cooperativa agraria de Aséquia’¹⁹ (2008) in Córdoba, taking place in a SCA and social pedagogical framework.

However, some studies can be mentioned here, such as the work of Graciani (2005), who addresses lived experiences in working with street children in Brazil, and there she demonstrates the application of social pedagogy and SCA practice as an approach to address street children’s needs. Another study, by Tonheim (nd), which describes the use of SCA action research as a facilitator of children’s participation in Madagascar, is a worthy example to be mentioned here.

A similar issue is discussed by Rynänen (2009) who is writing her PhD dissertation on street violence among street children in Brazil, a study which took place in Salvador, Brazil, in a framework of social pedagogy. In this study she combines critical ethnography and social pedagogy as research frameworks. Her arguments are that there is a need for a contextualized approach in research practice from critical social pedagogy, where the structural frames of the society are the results of the dialectic relationships of individuals in their everyday’s lives. This means that participation is the main character of the research practice, and through this it is possible to meet the contextual definitions and meanings given to the social reality.

This is a position also shared by Dinís (2000) in his article “A pedagogia de rua” (The pedagogy of the street), where he states that the street can be an alternative, a space that allows creative trickery to escape the homogenization models imposed by the disciplinary society, but it can also become a medium that has no return, when embarking on paths of destruction and death, and street pedagogy should be addressed to avoid this deviation.

Other examples of the application of SCA as research approaches can be found in Finland, having as examples the writings of Leena Kurki, who addressed the application of SCA in leisure time, SCA in prisons and with elderly people, among other important topics of social work practice (see Kurki 2008; 2004; 2002; 2000a; 2000b).

¹⁹ Information gathered during my personal visits to Spain in 2008, where I visited the Asséquia cooperative and CIC Batá in order to understand how they approach SCA and social pedagogy.

As Nieuwenhuys (2003) notes, much of the experience with action research has been with adults, and in the case of children, the method becomes not only less self-evident but also not devoid of risks. For her, there is a need to integrate street educators in all interventions of action research with street children, since they have a better understanding of the social reality of their everyday lives, and they could better address their needs and threats.

In summary, SCA participatory action research can be referred to as an educational practice where action appears with the basic principles that define the transformation, development, social and cultural change to improve the community of street children and their communities of origin, having as the main approach the integration of theory and practice by working *with* street children rather than working *for* street children. The most important aspect is the need for social research to be focused on developing practical outcomes as a response to the street children's needs and interests.

The following chapter presents the research methods of data production and analysis used to implement SCA participatory action research with street children in the city of Maputo

Chapter 5 : Analytical procedures of the field work

*Remember, the storm is a good
opportunity for the pine and the
cypress to show their strength and
their stability. Ho Chi Minh*

5.1. An eye on the methods used

In the previous chapter I made a general presentation on SCA participatory action research. As a continuum to the methodological aspect of this study, this chapter aims at making a brief presentation on the data production processes and at describing the data analysis procedures in brief. It also focuses briefly on the ethical concerns involved in implementing a research practice, with the direct participation of street children.

Social workers basing their research approach on SCA participatory action research always work with and within a community setting or a group of people (Ander-Egg 1997.). During the fieldwork research I focused my interest on learning the possibilities of active participation within people's social and cultural setting, but at the same time there was a need for me to increase my self-awareness of being part of, rather than being separate from, the data by reflecting on my personal experiences and feelings throughout the process of fieldwork taking place (Lipson 1989).

In this study I focused on dialogical action (Freire 1988) in correlation with informal conversations, active participation in all activities of the research group and on some personal experiences of the street children's life situations. Here, street children were active participants together with the Child to Child Association (CCA) staff members who have been directly involved in the research process, and all together they have reflected on their own reality through interpersonal interaction, engaged on the same level as members of a work team aiming at finding better alternatives for their personal lives. My focus was on describing how I as a researcher, together with the CCA staff members and street children interacted during the research process, with the aim both of promoting the participation of street children as actors and subjects of their social change (Ander-Egg 1997; Freire 1988) and of making sense of each social context of action while gaining an understanding of the social situation (Aamodt 1989; Anderson 1991.).

The central question in this SCA research practice was how the participation of the participants influenced the team members' self-awareness and promoted social changes in their personal and the group's social lives. From a methodological point of view, my focus was to establish relationships and promote commitment between the team members in order to produce social change in their personal lives and in group structures instead of describing people's social life and situation in detail.

5.2. Data production and analysis processes

For the purpose of this study, what I consider as research data are the *processes of interaction* that took place during the implementation of the fieldwork with street children and with the Child to Child Association (CCA) staff in Maputo. These interactions aimed at *social change* in the personal lives of the street children. The analysis and findings of this study focus solely on these processes and the effects on street children's social lives, with special emphasis on their role in leading their lives through the process of social reintegration, the construction of self-confidence and determination.

During this study I do not use the term data collection; as this was an SCA participatory action research project, there was no data collection at all, but much data was indeed produced throughout interaction and relationships.

For this study, the processes of data production and a summary of the research report and analysis are described in the following table:

Table 2. Data production and analysis

| Research stages | Timing | Methods | Analysis | Application | Ob |
|---|----------------|--|--|---|----|
| Stage I: Critical analysis of social reality | | | | | |
| Getting to know the CCA work | 01/06 to 10/06 | Direct observation and interaction, dialogical conversations and institutional documents and reports | Ethnographic immersion, notes from field diary | Content about the context of the research | |

| | | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|--|--|--|
| Understanding the political and social context of the research process | 01/06 to 10/06 | Document review and direct observation | Analysis of documents and internet sources | Content about the context of the research | |
| Stage II: Research team selection and 1st activity planning | | | | | |
| Identifying research team members | 11/06 to 20/06 | Dialogical conversations and individual report skills | | Content of research team selection | |
| Planning field activities | 24/06 | Participatory planning | Direct observation | Content of the activity plan | |
| Stage III: Trip to street children's community and selection of street children's working team | | | | | |
| Identifying street children communities | 01/07 to 12/08 | Open interviews, dialogical conversation, direct observation | Diary notes, direct observation notes and active participation levels. | Identification of street children communities, and construction of location map | |
| Selecting street children research team | 01/07 to 01/08 | Dialogical conversations, direct observation and open interviews | Diary notes, direct observation notes and active participation levels. | Definition of personal background and interests. Plan of personal activities and actions | |
| Stage IV: Hermeneutic reading of street children's communities – Utopias | | | | | |
| Malanga and Assembleia Zones individual characterises and social situations and definition of alternative solutions to encountered problems | 01/08 to 21/08 | Direct observations, dialogical conversations, open interviews and focused group discussion | Diary notes, direct observations and open interviews' contents | Analyzing social reality of street children's situation of Malanga and Assembleia-Ford zones. Creating utopias | |
| Stage V: Social reintegration processes | | | | | |
| Social reintegration processes | 01/09 to 28/11 | Active participation, direct observation, dialogical conversation | Diary notes, direct observations and open conversation | Content of social reintegration processes and other activities | |
| Stage VI: Follow-up and evaluation processes | | | | | |
| Follow-up and continuous evaluation | 01/06 to 22/12 | Continuous evaluation meetings, weekly discussions | Analysis of the reports' contents | Monitoring activity plan implementation process | |

To gather more accurate information during this study, I also used CCA reports and documents referring to activities and work practice from an institutional point of view. In association with these documents, an internet-based web source about the city of Maputo, its economic and social situation were visited and analyzed throughout the content analysis.

We as a team took several photos during the research process but none of these photos were used or will be used in the research protocol due to ethical considerations of informed consent presented in the following section.

During the fieldwork practice, no voice recorders were used, and all quotes and notes were made after the meetings. After the activities were over, the members of the research group had to recall the most important moments, and they registered this information in a field note book, in order to avoid discomfort to the street children and other intervenients.

5.3. The selection of working team members

In most cases, an ethnographic research approach selects informants based on their knowledge of the studied phenomenon (Spradley 1979; Agar 1981; Leininger 1985). However, in this study there were no informants, since this term demonstrates the existence of power relations between the researcher and the researched, where the researcher is the holder of power who makes decisions and influences the entire team to follow a certain approach. I reject the idea that they were informants because we were all active agents, informing and being informed of the social reality through a permanent exchange of knowledge. This is what makes SCA an egalitarian perspective of work, as I mentioned in previous sections (Ander Egg 1997; Freire 1983).

As all the staff members of the CCA and all members of the street children communities were suitable to participate in all of the activities of the research project, I had to make a selection of the team members. The selection of CCA staff members to join the team was made on the basis of their reporting skills and self-interest. The director of the CCA also contributed to this selection; he first recommended some of his staff members, also taking into account their level of knowledge of the domain of the

study as well as their ability to interpret the meanings of their own daily social and cultural practices (Pelto & Pelto 1978.).

The street children communities and groups for action plan (activities in the field) were selected according to group (social worker and CCA staff) definition criteria, where the main element was based on accessibility of the group, previous contact with the group by CCA staff members and age status (not older than 18 years of age).

During the research process, direct observation, active participation and dialogical conversations permeated the entire process, where I worked with the group as facilitator of social interactions and as group leader, but the feeling of leadership was invisible, since all members of the work team had similar responsibilities and each one had to report what he did or did not do to the entire research group at the evaluation meetings held weekly. The nurse, psychologist and street educators kept personal working diaries for all the fieldwork activities, where they wrote down the events, experiences, feelings and ideas concerning their work with the street children.

The street children taking part in the research work did not have diaries, as more than 90 percent of them were not able to write, but they also reported their memories of the activities that had taken place during the week and their own personal experiences, feelings and fears about the work being done. These data production methods enabled me to collect both ethic and emic data.

The street children were invited several times to give their opinions and contributions during discussions and occasionally, they collected pieces of information on individual and community life. The interviews enabled me to review the reasons for them becoming street children, as well as about their social settings and their life on the streets, their personal experiences and expectations for the future.

5.4. Data analysis procedures

The data analysis proceeded after each individual step was over; I categorized, described and documented raw data taken from the interviews, active participation in the activities, direct observation and diaries; then I identified the descriptions of the children's lives, their hopes, dreams and expectations from diaries of the other members

of the research team and I compared this information with my own observations and notes.

With regard to the children's participation, I made a list of basic questions that they had to answer on each contact and on this basis I made my notes: How did they respond to our arrival? What was the collective and individual mood today? Who asked questions and or gave answers to collective interests? What were the group's interests today? What kind of games, topics or ideas did they give during the meeting? What else did we do? (See appendix 3)

By getting answers to these questions I could find out whether our contact each day with the street children was in some way providing insights on their participation or not, and how this participation took place.

On issues concerning social changes in the street children's lives, I defined two topics which were presented as questions: How does each member of the group express himself during each contact (openly, shyly, angrily or violently, etc.)? How does each member of the group identify himself with the project (observed through the interest in participating or proposing activities, the opinions each member gives, and the dedication the group has in further developing the activities)?

My notes on these questions gave me the possibility to see how each member of the group identified himself/herself as a member of the group and what kind of proposals s/he had with regard to our activities. These signs could provide me with insights on how aware they were of their social reality, and based on their decisions it was possible to see what kind of utopias they had and how they planned to provide solutions to it, which is a sign of self-awareness.

These notes were made after each contact and after each evaluation meeting with the group and also during personal reflections at home. The majority of quotes used in this report are a result of recalling and reconstructing the remarks that each participant made during the meetings.

After this I transcribed the processes of social reintegration, feelings and expectation within the group and the families taking part in the process, including an analysis of the context in which the activities took place. This was possible through constant registration of the field notes about the reaction of each child during the contact

with his family members, how he and his family members expressed the moment of contact and how the child participated in the reunion with his family members.

The final step in data analysis was to construct a structure of how to report the information gathered.

I coded the data into three important categories: participation, changes that are possible to be observed in the short term, and the expected changes in the long term as shown in the table below:

Table 3. Data analysis categories

| Category | Objectives | Observations |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Participation | Analysing and evaluating ²⁰ the levels of participation of the street children, CCA staff members and observing to what extent the methodology provided insights for the fuller participation of all research team members. | This evaluation took place every week, based on all team members' contribution in providing insights for each situation encountered during the week. |
| Short-term observable changes | Identifying social changes that the street children showed in terms of their self-confidence, contribution to decision-making, level of their awareness and interest in changing their lives. This category also gave me information about what had changed in real terms in the street children's lives and in CCA staff members' work expertise. | Participation is itself a change, when it comes to how team members started to identify themselves with the study objectives. The street children's capacity to decide what s/he wants and how. This evaluation took place during the follow-up weekly meeting. |
| Long-term expected changes | What are my personal speculations about what will possibly happen after a period of 6 months in the CCA institutional setting, and what will be the future of these children who have taken part in this research work? | This information would be provided in the long term by CCA personnel, through e-mail and phone contact. However, there is a huge gap in the follow-up processes that the research project did not predict. |

5.5. Ethical concerns

In every research work, researchers become part of a larger effort to understand the world and contribute towards making the world a better or worse place. SCA participatory research focuses on human beings, and this comes with special

²⁰ In this process the evaluation was made by all the team members by asking each one: what were the changes s/he observed since we started working together.

responsibilities such as ethical concerns, which are of major importance. This study is not separate from these ethical concerns, and it follows the ethical guidelines presented by the Research Ethics Framework²¹ as follows:

The study was designed, reviewed and undertaken with a view to ensuring the integrity and quality of the work:

- All research members were fully informed about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entailed and what risks, if any, were involved. This information took place through a one-day seminar with CCA member staff, where I made a full presentation of the research project, the objectives of the research project and possible implications. During this session, all staff members had the opportunity to make questions about their doubts and worries.

I also had many conversations with the street children who were members of Malanga and Assembleia-Ford zone, the two zones that were selected to be part of the research group. During these conversations and discussions, the CCA staff members and I made a brief clarification of our intentions with them, explaining the research project and possible implications to each one, as well as the right to join the working group freely.

- All information regarding the research members and other participants is entirely confidential, and an informed consent agreement was made before undertaking any activity. All research members are presented in the research report anonymously, with change of names and locations. The name of the hosting research practice was changed as well.

- All research members participated voluntarily, free from any coercion, and there was a previous session in order to negotiate their participation with the CCA as their working place and with the street children in their living places;

- Any possible harm to the research participants was taken into account at the very first step in order to permanently avoid this possibility. That is why the working team

²¹ http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11291.pdf

was composed of a psychologist, nurse and street educators, who had extensive experience in working with street children.

Peled & Leichtentritt (2002) quoting Lincoln (1995) state that ethical standards should be viewed as fundamental quality criteria used to judge the rigour and merit of any social science study. As Kvale (1996) quoted by Peled & Leichtentritt (ibid) states, ethical considerations are not limited to the design phase, but may evolve at any phase of the study, including at the dissemination stage. This means that if a research does not observe the main elements of ethical standards, it should not and can not be considered a good study, since it does not follow the quality criteria.

This study, from its methodological setting, which is mainly a SCA participatory action research, seeks to promote the free participation of the research group, with a clear understanding of the main goals and tasks of all activities to be developed. It had taken place through informed consent from the participant's point of view.

As Reason & Rowan mention, research can be seen as a dialogue aiming to produce valid knowledge (Reason & Rowan 1981 in Peled & Leichtentritt 2002). It is a meeting point and a shared experience of people who often differ in their social power, lifestyles and experiences, and in their understanding and expectations of the research and its products (Sieber 1992 in Peled & Leichtentritt 2002). This study paid special attention to these aspects of the research relationship, considering the welfare of all participants in the process from the beginning up to the end.

5.5.1. Ethical concerns from an institutional and political perspective

Mozambique has regulations when it comes to research practice with human beings. One of the general aspects of research ethics in Mozambique is that the researcher must be qualified and have the authorization to implement his/her research project. If not, s/he must be attached to an officially authorized institution that has the right to develop such activities.

For this matter, I asked the CCA to provide institutional coverage during the research process, since the CCA had an institutional right to develop research activities with children in difficult situations. In this sense, the research project was legally supported by this association.

To make this possible, the CCA made an agreement with me, in which it clearly states the research objectives, the possible implications of the research for the CCA and research participants, the role of the CCA in the research process and the contribution of the research to the CCA's future activities.

5.5.2. Ethical concerns concerning the street children and their families

According to Punch (1994), quoted by Peled & Leichtentritt (2002), "participants in qualitative studies are particularly vulnerable to invasion of privacy, unwanted identification, break of confidentiality and trust, misrepresentation, and exploitation". Special effort should be devoted throughout the research process to ensuring the well-being of participants situated in particularly vulnerable circumstances (Sieber 1992 in Peled & Leichtentritt 2002.).

Street children are, in most cases, the principal victims of these kinds of ethical faults. In most cases, they are simply used for interviews, and their stories are published without their consent. A good example of this is what was reported by street children during this fieldwork research practice, where children mentioned that many people came along, asked questions, took photographs and then published their pictures in newspapers without their consent.

These interviews bring back memories of sad stories and difficult moments during the street children's lives, with even traumatic effects after the process, but the researchers; on the other hand, when they have their data they just leave happily and forget the moment for ever and ever. During this research process, the cooperation established with the Child to Child Association provided full support with a nurse, psychologist, and street educators who were ready for all kinds of support in case it was needed for the street children who were participating in the activities related to this study.

The data production methods based on permanent interaction with the street children and the active participation of all members of the research team placed many demands on my ethical consciousness as a researcher.

During the entire research process I ensured that the street children were treated as autonomous individuals and that they had the right to decide whether to permit or not

permit such a deep incursion into the personal settings of their lives for research purposes (Fetterman 1989; Lipson 1994; Peled & Leichtentritt 2002.).

For this matter, the research group defined very basic ethical concerns such as asking permission to take photographs and to use them, asking permission to put a personal question to someone, making sure not to register names or personal identifiable information in the field notes. Since the majority of the research group members did not want their photos or video images to be taken, it was agreed that nobody should ever use photos or video images in his or her report and if we had photos we should destroy them in front of the entire team at the end of the research work.

During the celebration session, we destroyed all video images and data that had very easily identifiable setting contents in front of most of the participants in the process; this was important because we had previously agreed to do so, and we had to do it all together. First, as a group, we had a one-week period to select what was and what was not compromising information in the documents we had, what kind of images we could keep and what kind of images we should destroy, and on the celebration day we included in our agenda the destruction of all these materials.

With regard to the street children's families and their communities, we had first to establish contact with them, present ourselves, our interests, the objectives of the research and its implications. This was important to create the self-confidence and awareness of those participating in the research activity. All families gave us their consent, thus allowing us to continue with our activities, and some even asked whether they could take part in the process²².

5.5.3. Research competence matters

Qualitative research encompasses a multitude of paradigms, strategies of inquiry and methods. Hence, the ability to assess this aspect of research ethics depends on the availability of detailed information on the research and the researcher(s). Such

²² However, there was no previous contact with the families to have the consent in establishing contact and implementing the research. The consent hereby mentioned is related to those children who have been reintegrated and it was granted during the research process. For the case of children who did not want to establish contact with their families, there was no parental consent at all.

information will refer to both the characteristics and limitations of the researcher's relevant attributes, the paradigm, methodology, strategies and methods used for sampling, participant recruitment, data collection, analysis, and writing (Peled & Leichtenritt 2002.).

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, the street children phenomena is part of my personal biography. Because of my previous experience in conducting activities with street children and families in difficult situations and my previous study on street children's lives and social situations during my Master's degree in social work, I was fully prepared to implement such a major study. The contents of this report concern, in total, the agreements and informed consents I had with the CCA and with the street children participating in the research process.

However, I cannot reject the hypothesis of possible power imbalances, where a group of four adults (I, the street educator, the psychologist and the nurse) can, in a certain way, influence the relationship and even the possible behaviour of street children as members of the working team.

As Edmonds (2003) states, children have much less power than adults, a fact that compounds the inherent power relations whenever a researcher sets out to do research on individual members of any society and on any target group. Thus, utmost care must be taken to ensure that the children in question are participating of their own free will and that the rights of the child are fully respected in the research process.

As a concluding remark to this issue, it is indeed possible that my data may have some critical aspects in relation to this, since, when street children notice that research is being carried out, or for the simple fact of taking the street children's participation into account, they can immediately alter the way they perceive their situation, which can in turn affect the decisions they make, the opportunities they seek and the attitudes that they form.

Chapter 6 : Research findings- promoting social changes through active participation

*It always seems impossible
until it's done. Nelson Mandela*

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapters presented the methodological tools used to make this study possible. It is important to keep in mind that the stages of the study hereby presented are not separate from each other; they have a permanent connection and the essence of this study only makes sense if seen as a whole.

The present chapter aims at describing the processes of interaction that gave birth to social change through the active participation of street children, as claimed in previous chapters. This chapter presents the situations of data production determined by the establishment of relationships and the promotion of the active participation of street children. In this process the researcher is a member of a larger group of active individuals, with different social spaces but with the same goals, and united by a unique character: the hope to see things change for the better.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into seven (7) sections interconnected to each other. Section 1 presents the context in which this study took place, in this case the city of Maputo and the Child to Child Association (CCA). It also presents my reasons for choosing the CCA and not any other organization in Maputo. Section 2 presents the processes of the researcher's integration into the CCA as a hosting institution, the working team selection procedures, planning activities and difficulties encountered at the CCA. Section 3 gives a comprehensive description of encounters with street children communities, the identification and location of street children communities and the selection of communities that would be suitable to work with the research working group. Section 4 refers to the moment of connecting with the street children, discovering needs and planning solutions, proposing action and questioning the possibilities to provide solutions to the working team's hopes and dreams.

Section 5 gives a description of a story of success, the social reintegration processes of the street children members of the research team, while Section 6 reflects on the evaluation processes that took place during the implementation of the action plan and the creation of the local board of children's rights in Boane. Closing this chapter is Section 7, which summarizes all the activities that took place during the study.

6.2. The context of the fieldwork

6.2.1. Stage I: Critical analysis of social reality

The first stage of my fieldwork was to reconfirm and be sure about the social environment of the research field. For action research practice to take place, the researcher must be able to understand critically the context in which his work will take place, knowing the physical and social environment related to the field situation, everyday human relationships and the conflicting dominant values in the community (Quintana 1992).

This is a fundamental stage of a SCA praxeology research practice, because it enables the researcher to predict and plan future actions to avoid failure. My description of the Child to Child Association (CCA) and the city of Maputo as a context of fieldwork is based on open dialogues and direct observations made before and during the first stage of the fieldwork.

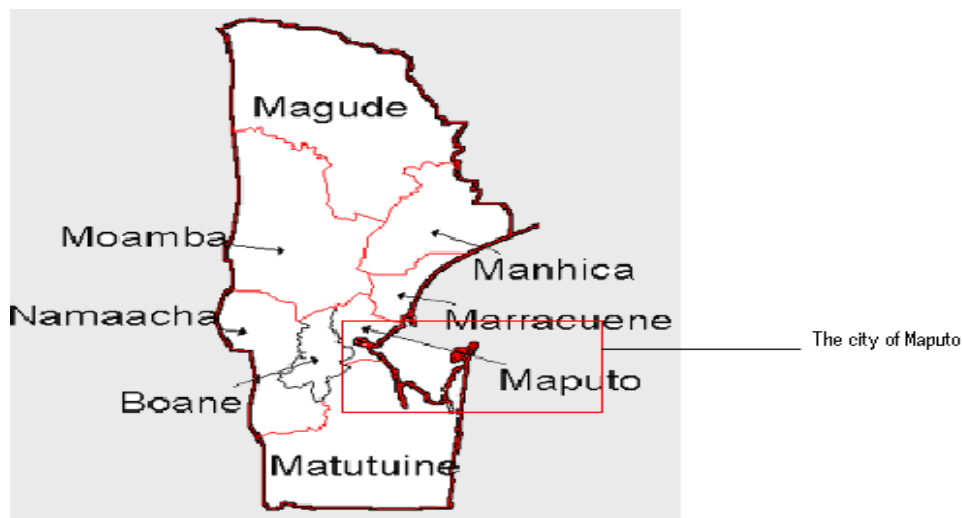
6.2.1.1. The city of Maputo

As presented in Chapter I, this study takes place in Sub-Saharan Africa, more specifically in Mozambique. The principal research site of the study is the city of Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, and it was hosted by the Child to Child Association (CCA), a local non-governmental organization (NGO) working with street children.

Maputo is the capital of Mozambique and of Maputo province (see Map 1); it is located on the west side of Maputo Bay, at the mouth of the Tembe River. The bay is 95 km (50 mi.) long and 30 km (20 mi.) wide. The Maputo River empties into the

southern end of the bay. Maputo, formerly Lourenço Marques, is the largest city of Mozambique. It has an official population of approximately 1,244,227 (INE 2006) where about 55 percent are children under 18 years of age, but the actual population is estimated to be much higher because of slums and other unofficial settlements. Coal, cotton, sugar, chromites, sisal, copra, and hardwood are the chief exports. The city manufactures cement, pottery, furniture, shoes, and rubber. There is also a large aluminium smelting plant, Mozal.

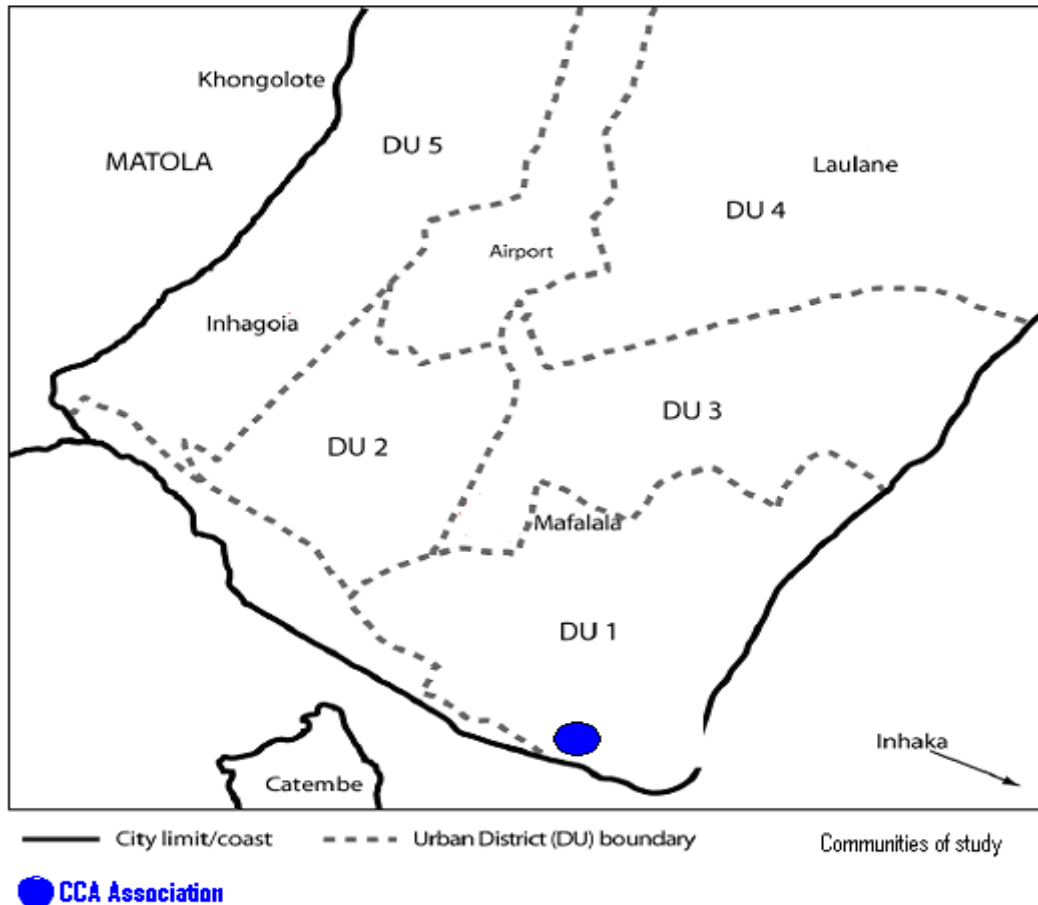
The city of Maputo borders the province of Maputo and its provincial capital Matola, which was separated from the city of Maputo in 1987 but which effectively forms part of “Greater Maputo”. The climate is sub-tropical, with a rainy season from November to March, even though the seasons seem to be less clear-cut these days. Maputo boasts an international airport, railway and harbour, and is connected with South Africa and Swaziland via national roads with the border only about an hour away.



Map 2. The city of Maputo and fieldwork site

There is a total of 49 residential quarters (known as bairros and in this study mentioned as communities) in the 5 urban districts, and the 3 communities on which this study focused in Maputo are located in Urban Districts 1, and 2 respectively and the organization (CCA), where the study had an institutional backup was located in Urban District 1 (see Map 3). Maputo covers an area of 801,600 km², and the total population

is estimated to be 1,099,102 million in 2007, giving a population density of 2,790 per km² (INE 2008). Most of the formal “cement city”²³ is located in Urban Districts 1 and 2, while the other districts contain a mixture of semi-formal households and informal households bearing the characteristics of informal settlements, shantytowns or slums.



6.2.1.2. CCA in brief

The **Child to Child Association (CCA)** is a non-profit-making Mozambican NGO. Its activities focus on medical and social support for unprotected children in Maputo. At the present moment (2009), the CCA is working with about 381 street children located in 30 identified places (zones) in Maputo. The CCA also works in partnership with about 12 rehabilitation centre members of Rede Da Criança (Childnet) and in

²³ Meaning that the houses are built with bricks and are of a high standard.

collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, National Programme for HIV/AIDS, MONASO (Mozambique Network of AIDS Service Organization), PSI and Red Cross Mozambique.

This association was created in 1994 by a French organization, with the objective of providing basic health care for boys and girls living on Maputo's streets. However, the health support project funded by this organization came to an end in 1996, and a group of ex-workers decided to continue with the project in a wider perspective, including social and psychological support for street children. That is when the name changed to the Child to Child Association (CCA). The CCA develops its activities in three main areas, namely: medical care, social assistance and training (school and vocational) for street children.

Medical care: the major objective of this activity is to promote access to basic health care with periodic medical consultations in the Railways' Health Centre (with which the CCA has a partnership), first aid for street children in the CCA, and psychological assistance. However, it is important to note here that the health services provided at the CCA do not replace the hospital as such. Street children may also take baths, which is a compulsory activity for all children entering the CCA's centre, including the possibility to wash their clothes.

Social support: the CCA's centre, located in the downtown area, benefits from a reception room, where children can make drawings, read, participate in sessions for health education, and see videos. As regards reintegration, children can be reunited with their families if they wish; they can also be integrated in closed system centres²⁴ or simply relax.

Vocational Training: as pre-vocational training for girls, they are provided with specific activities such as hairdressing, cooking, sewing, ironing and other activities according to their talents and interests, with the purpose to enable them to have the professional skills necessary to perform a job and to ensure their sustenance.

²⁴ In general there are two types of rehabilitation centres. Firstly, open system centres, where street children do not live but only go there to get basic support and are free to leave and come back as they wish. These centres usually function only during the day. Secondly, closed system centres, where children live permanently and get full support, following a tight schedule and regulations. Normally these centres function 24 hours a day.

Schooling: in this area, the CCA aims to ensure basic education as a way to give the opportunity to children in vulnerable situations, by enrolling street children in a public school once they are reintegrated into a family.

Alongside these activities, the CCA has other programmes, such as the vaccination of street children, issuing health cards, obtaining IDs, prevention of HIV/AIDS and STDs, educational lectures and first aid training for health workers in the centre who work with children. The CCA has 21 employees: 2 nurses, 5 teachers, 2 drivers, 3 guards, 5 street educators and an administrative staff composed of 4 people.

6.2.1.3. Why the CCA?

I have chosen the CCA due to the historical relation I had with this institution and on its background regarding its work with street children. It is important that the researcher knows and understands as much as possible of the context in which s/he will develop the research (Ander-Egg 1997).

In my case, I had a previous knowledge of the CCA, based on friendship relations with CCA leaders in formal activities with street children, long before I started my studies in Finland. Through this relationship, I created the opportunity for Finnish Master and BA students in social work, from Pirkanman Ammatikorkeakoulu (PIRAMK) and the Department of Social Work Research at the University of Tampere, to have their field placements in Maputo at the CCA. For most of these students, I acted as tutor at a local level, and this maintained my relationship with the CCA both as a friend and also as a professional. Students who had their field placements and wrote their Master's thesis and Bachelor's thesis on children's rights in Mozambique are Jaana Salo (2009), Riikka Salokangas (2010), and Mirja Hentila (2008), among others.

To be able to work with the CCA, the leader of the institution introduced me to the working team of the organization in order to have enough support from everybody and also to give them the opportunity to get to know about the research methodology, its goals, implications for the CCA, and the implications for those street children who would be participating in the research process.

This was an important task, so that everybody could participate and give their best during the implementation of the research project. To clarify doubts and any possible

misunderstanding of the research project, a one-day seminar (research seminar programme in Appendix I) was held, to present the project to the CCA staff and to identify those who might be interested in participating in the research process.

Even though the CCA had used a similar approach to socio-cultural animation, the CCA's staff had never heard about it as a social work methodology. The differences between SCA and the CCA's methodology can be traced from the decision-making process, the idea of the full participation of all members in all activities, the militant component, and the pedagogical and cultural components during the implementation of their projects.

At the CCA, the decisions about where to work, with whom and how to work were always made from a top-down perspective, and the staff did not have any other choice than to obey. This made all working team simple servants of the CCA; they did not identify themselves with the CCA's goals and there was no space for questioning whatever they doubted. No periodic meetings were held for the consultation and planning of future interventions, the projects came ready-made and the staff had simply to implement them. Participation was lacking at the CCA at the very beginning of this research project. The passive behaviour of staff was against the militant need of SCA, as, from a SCA perspective, people should be able to question and intervene for their best interest, and people should struggle for their freedom (Freire 1983).

There is always a need to have a clear conscience about what is going on and why, when and how everything is taking place; this was totally missing at the CCA. These were my challenges during the implementation of my research practice, because to make people change their everyday practice is not an issue of one day nor even a year; it is a long term process.

6.3. Practical work with the CCA staff

6.3.1. Stage II: Research team selection and planning

After getting acquainted with the environment in which the study was to take place, it was time then to get to know the people with whom I would carry out this fieldwork in practice. This was, however, a continuation of my critical reading of social reality,

where my interest was to understand how they worked and to what extent I could become a member of the working team in order to be able to start the project. It was also a moment of establishing basic relationships, which are crucial in this kind of research approach, because in SCA the way you relate to each other, the way you communicate and the way you understand each other, plays an important role in the process as a whole.

At this stage, my interest was also to be able to identify future team members, those who would actively give their contribution in implementing my fieldwork project. To make this possible, the used methodology was based on document and content analysis associated with direct observation and interaction during the realization of each staff member's everyday tasks. My participation in the CCA's daily activities played an important role, as the CCA staff learnt to accept me as a working member and started to share their feelings and perspectives of work with me.

6.3.1.1. Selecting the research team from the CCA staff

Selecting a team to work with in an action research approach is not as simple a task as many times it is thought to be; it involves many concerns. For instance, to establish a good working team, I needed time to observe and understand how each one worked in the field, what his or her skills were in matters of reporting, communication, and as well as his/her difficulties in these matters. I also participated actively in most of the street educator's everyday work together with psychologists. The nurses always stayed inside the centre, so they did not go out onto streets so often, unless a child had been reported ill and was not able to come on his own to the CCA, and if there was no transport to pick him/her up from his/her zone to take him/her to the CCA.

In order to be able to see and comprehend the nurses' work, I inspected their registration books and asked other street educators and the CCA leader for advice.

The selection of the working team from the CCA was influenced by some principles proposed by Di Carlo et al (1997) as operative principles of social work with groups, and they are as follows: the principle of conscientious and planned group conformation (the ability of the group to make diagnoses, define starting points and goals, make decisions and plan for action); the principle of persons and group

singularity (each member of the group is unique and the entire group is composed by the uniqueness of each member, even if the group is a unity, with its characteristics and peculiarities); the principle of professional relation (each member of the group establishes a permanent relation with the group as a unity throughout communication skills); the principle of acceptance (accepting and respecting the others as they are without judgments and preconceptions or stereotypes); the principle of organization (each member of the group knows and follows his/her responsibilities within the group work); the principle of constructive interaction (each member of the group must be able to support and facilitate the group or other members in finding solutions to specific tasks or difficulties); the principle of objectivity (each member of the group works to achieve group goals and interests) and the principle of conscious action (each member should and must be aware of all processes through which s/he is participating and is committed in making each of the planned actions possible).

During the first 3 weeks, my work was to understand the everyday work of the CCA's street educators in their street activities, where the main tasks were to locate street children, identify their real situation, help them with medical and psychological support, discuss with them the opportunity to get back to their families (for the reintegration process) and find alternative solutions to conflicts they have with the local police, their family and friends. During this period, I had the opportunity of getting to know street children with whom the CCA had been in contact, identifying the main areas of activities and their focal points. I also evaluated the personal commitment, reporting and documentation abilities of the staff members, especially the street educators who had the major role in this process.

My findings at this stage of direct observation and preliminary interaction were that all street educators were able to match the above-mentioned principles and that all had serious difficulties in reporting and communicating the results of their work to other colleagues and to their superiors. In my understanding, this was much related to the structural organization of the CCA, their communication possibilities and the space given to employees to communicate with each other.

According to staff comments during our informal conversations on the topic of participational opportunities in institutional matters and decision-making processes, there was no possibility whatsoever to question what they had been doing, the reasons

why they had to do whatever they did and the processes they had to follow. Staff members were simply followers of the administration, with no right to give an opinion or to change the project settings they had been working with. Street educators and psychologists had simply and only to report how many children they had met and had been reintegrated within a certain period of work, while the nurses had to report how many children they assisted and what kind of diseases they manifested during a certain period of time.

Staff members mentioned that weekly meetings were held between staff and the programme coordinator but never with the top personnel of the organization, and if the important decision-makers participated in these meetings, it was only to give orders, and those who wanted to talk should “measure what they say” with the risk of losing their job. Those weekly-held meetings aimed at reporting and discussing what they had been doing during the week, but if they presented difficulties and challenges, they were never listened and nothing was taken into serious consideration.

The programme coordinator of the organization had the responsibility to report to the decision makers what was happening in the field, based on the street educators’, nurses’ and psychologists’ oral information on a weekly basis.

During this period, I also identified the lack of reporting skills in almost all staff members, especially those working on the streets and establishing permanent contact with reality. Reports of practice situations were mainly made through oral communication, and some notes were taken by the programme coordinator.

In order to be able to select my team members and make sure I achieved my fieldwork objectives, I proposed to the leader of the organization to have a one-day seminar with the entire staff and make an open proposal for a group who would like to join the research project. At this seminar I introduced the above-mentioned principles of the group members and the implications of each one’s participation in the research process. I mentioned that there was an advantage of learning in practice the implementation of a new methodological approach of working with street children and the possibility to teach this methodology to other staff members when the research work was done.

The seminar was held in the 3rd week of the fieldwork, more precisely on 19th June 2009, and all staff members working directly with the street children were invited to

join the meeting. Their interest in becoming members of the research group was promptly manifested by all right after the meeting had ended. Due to the fact that there were not many differences between the staff members, and they did not have any written report, I randomly selected a team of 2 street educators, 1 nurse and 1 psychologist.

6.3.1.2. Misunderstandings and challenges

Since I had noticed the lack of registration of information about the street children in the fieldwork reports, and of the street educators' activities, I proposed to the leader of the organization that I would give a one-week training session to the CCA's staff on documentation and reporting techniques. The idea of the training was to provide all the CCA's staff with the tools to document and report their work in the field (See appendix 2 about the course outline). During this training, topics like participation, project design and reporting were discussed.

The results of the one-week seminar were immediately observable and had a deep impact on the structure and social organization setting. One of the most important targets of SCA action research is to build consciousness in people, members of a community or group work, in order to become active members for their social and cultural development, becoming active subjects of their social change and promoting social well-being in their social context (Merino 1997; Ander-Egg 1997; Freire 1994b.). The seminar awakened staff members to the need of questioning what was going on in their working activities and responsibilities, how projects were being planned and budgeted, and how they could and should contribute to making their work as good as possible. From that time on, staff members became aware of their right to participate in the definition of the action plans, projects and budgeting, and they developed skills and tools for reporting their activities.

Their learning these issues brought about a revolutionary attitude, as they then asked the leader of the organization to hold a meeting, where they proposed that they should be given the opportunity to see the projects they were implementing and the right to make a contribution to the definition and design of such projects they worked

on, so that the defined activities would be realistic and applicable. They also discussed the need to define clear objectives and plans that could match the reality of their work.

Unfortunately, this request was seen as a threat to the CCA's stability, as, according to the leader of the organization, the employees started to ask too many questions regarding their work, and I was accused of promoting instability. For him, the CCA's staff should not be questioning the process of defining intervention projects, because they were not academically qualified for that. These arguments were not clear enough, as I noticed that if employees at the CCA got to know about the planning and definition of the projects, including budgeting, this could bring into question the reality of their salaries which were extremely low (minimum 62 euros and not higher than 180 euros monthly).

Regarding this matter, the leader of the organization called me for a meeting, where he expressed his views as follows²⁵:

“Marrengula, we have been good friends for a long time and I would really like to keep this relationship as good as it is. In your course, you have been talking about things that are not meant to be discussed, such as salaries and budgeting. Now my staff is starting to question these issues. I thought it was only about reporting that you were training them, and I was truly glad about that...but with this situation I would prefer to lose our friendship than let you promote instability in my organization. I'm asking you to stop this kind of activity and if you want to continue working with some of my staff, it is ok...but you will have to make your own contribution to their income”.

He continued as follows:

“You know, things are not as they seem to be, money issues with people like my staff are very complicated; we never discuss project budgeting with them, because they do not understand what it is about and how to plan a project budget”.

²⁵ Information hereby quoted was recalled after the discussion and translated from Portuguese to English by the researcher. I tried to reconstruct fully the conversation as it took place.

This discussion took many directions, from an administrative perspective, to human resources matters, from social and personal issues to institutional and economic factors at a national level. I agreed with his position, but I argued that:

“...in an organization with such honourable goals as yours is, staff should be aware of the institutional, organizational, and material situation in order to avoid misunderstandings. The source of their income should be clear to all, along with the application of funds and the processes of planning activities, so that they can give a deeper contribution in their work and through their work (...) participation of staff in the planning process is one of the most important tools for success in the implementation of the entire work besides contributing to personal commitment and the self-affirmation of staff”.

This attitude is what Freire (1983; 1994a) calls a banking education system, where the oppressor tries to maintain the oppressive system by rejecting the possibility for the oppressed to understand the reality, and he is the only one who can provide knowledge. However, Freire states that the praxis that defines human existence is marked by this historicity, this dialectical interplay between the ways in which history and culture make people, even while people are making that very history and culture. Human historicity enables the realization of freedom, opening up choices among various ways of being within any given situation. At the level of our being human, freedom can never be eliminated from existence, while at the level of our concrete practices, freedom is not a given but is always precarious and must be achieved through education.

In the CCA staff members' everyday practice, the opportunities to embody freedom were hidden, through oppressive practices of hidden knowledge based on the economic management system, which emphasizes efficiency without question and at the same time threatens staff members with the possibility of losing their jobs.

Freire (1983; 1994a), in his theory of praxis, argued that the struggle to be free, to be human and to make history and culture from the given situation, is an inherent possibility in the human condition. The struggle is necessary because the situation contains not only this possibility for humanization, but also for dehumanization.

Dehumanizing forces reside in both the material and psychic conditions of persons and situations (such as the CCA staff members), so freedom requires people to engage in a kind of historic-cultural and political analysis.

To provide a solution to this oppressive situation, Freire (1994b; 1998) proposes hope as a way to emancipation, where he described hope as an ontological need that should be *anchored in practice* in order to become *historically concrete*, and hope must be rooted in practice, in the struggle through emancipator education, an education based on democratic egalitarian practice.

Based on these assumptions and on my discussion with the CCA leader, I decided that through action and through practice he will learn and develop a critical understanding of social reality, and that we (research members) would be able to transform social reality by action and through action. As the leader of the organization proposed that I should make a financial contribution to his staff member's salaries, I promised to plan ahead and make arrangements to make sure I could contribute. I asked him whether I could continue working with the team and he answered positively. From that point on I had to make a new assessment of my work plan, my financial capacities and evaluate the challenges I had to face.

First I had 5,000 euros for the six-month fieldwork practice, so it was necessary to make my activity plan according to the local costs. I decided to keep working with the team and contribute 30 euros to those who could join the team, but this should not be seen as a salary, but as a bonus due to their extra work during the fieldwork activities. The work team was composed of 1 street educator, 1 psychologist, and 1 nurse. The following table shows the planning of the budgetary issues based on the encountered situations.

Table 4. Financial situation of the research project

| Fieldwork financial situation in euros | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------|---|
| Ord. | Application | Amount | Observation |
| 1 | Transport /Petrol | 2,000 | |
| 2 | Pocket money | 540 | For staff members and street children, if necessary |
| 3 | Printing and paper | 50 | |
| 4 | Child support | 1,000 | |
| 5 | Other | 1,410 | |
| Total | | 5,000 | 5,000 |

At the beginning I thought about giving this money to the CCA administration, but first I met the selected working group to discuss the issue and they immediately rejected the idea; they mentioned that if I gave the money to CCA, they would not get it at all. They preferred to get the money directly from me, and that they should only inform the CCA administration about this payment.

This situation shows that in SCA research practice, communication skills and the ability to negotiate situations are very important tasks, and sometimes the researcher, social worker, animator or ethnographer needs to be aware of new unplanned situation that can surprisingly come about through his/her research work, and even to be more aware when this research work aims at promoting participation in a context where it is lacking. I myself did not have this type of situation in mind; I expected a much more positive reaction from the CCA, as my main goal was to promote better results in the institution's work.

6.3.2. Moving forward: defining responsibilities and planning activities

After selecting the research team, we set up meetings every Monday to discuss the week's activities and share the difficulties we had been facing during the process. For the entire team it was important to make a plan so that we could work in an organized way. That is what we did during the first meeting.

The first meeting focused on finding answers to the question:

“What can be done by the working team in order to help street children help themselves, to help them understand their social environment and find possible alternatives for their future?”

It was, however, a complex and long question to be answered in a one-day meeting, but I also made clear that we could start by focusing our attention on what we thought was the priority for our work, but we should keep in mind that the important task and goal of this work was to encourage street children to participate in their own social change, in their own and responsive action for change and to construct the possibilities of a better life. I also explained to the group that our objective was not merely to take street children back home, but to help them take wise decisions and define alternative

solutions they had in their real surroundings, because I believed that there were solutions within their social environment.

It was necessary to repeat to the team the objectives of the research practice and its implications for everyone who would participate in it, and most important in the case of the CCA staff was the possibility of learning this methodological approach and possibly applying it in their everyday work plan.

However, the team was quite aware of their work and tasks, and everybody was keen to make a contribution in order to produce valuable results. Interesting discussions took place and several contradictory and important positions were presented. Some are summarized as follows²⁶:

- *“It is not possible to help street children help themselves, because they have chosen the life they are taking and they like to live the way they live. The only thing we can do is to find funding and give them health care and some food whenever we can;*
- *First we should get to know why they are living on the streets, since when and how many there are, and then we can take clear decisions about the steps to follow. It is important also to know their interests, because they might not be interested in having our help at all;*
- *There is a lot we can do, but first we should ask them what they want;*
- *The best thing we can do for those children is to take them back home and make sure they have somebody to take care of them;*
- *Actually, it is kind of impossible to decide what to do, we have been doing this all the time, we work with those kids and they are somehow stressed...I think we should first get to know them and try to find what they really need, because each one has his own problems and interests;*

²⁶ All the following quotes were recalled after the encounter; no equipment was used to record the information, which was afterwards registered in a field note book. The languages used were Changana, Ronga, street slang, Portuguese, Sena, Chopi, which were translated into English during the writing of the present report.

- *I tell you one thing; there is no better life on the streets, so the best thing to do is to persuade them to return to their homes no matter why they are on the streets.*

- (...) “

These are just some of the answers among many other positions that came across in the discussion on how to help street children. My task here was solely as a mediator, so I did not reject nor accept any answer or position, thereby respecting all positions. However, I had to explain one important thing in our methodology of work, i.e, that in SCA everybody was right as long as they had a conscience and were able to defend their ideas with facts and actions. In my comments I also explained that if we never try to do anything, nothing would happen; it was most important for us to be able to understand what was going on in our lives and in street children’s lives, and then we could make our judgments.

Then I asked the team, “*What could we do to implement everything that all the members have proposed as a possible solution?*” In the ensuing discussion we constructed the following activity plan that was agreed on by every member of the team:

Table 5. Activity plan with CCA staff members

| Item | Activity | Jun. | Jul. | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |
|------|--|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| 01 | Mapping street children’s community | | | | | | | |
| 02 | Identifying street children with whom we will work | | | | | | | |
| 03 | Planning meetings with street children | | | | | | | |
| 04 | Identifying and visiting other organizations | | | | | | | |
| 05 | Reintegration processes ²⁷ | | | | | | | |
| 06 | Meeting families and communities (follow-ups) | | | | | | | |
| 07 | Writing and presenting results | | | | | | | |
| 08 | Celebration and closing session | | | | | | | |

A week later, we had to reflect on the activity plan we defined and also to make clear what each one should do to achieve our goal. We had to make a clear distinction of each

²⁷ Items 5, 6 and 7 would be done after identifying the street community with which we would work.

member's responsibility in the research process so that we would not duplicate activities.

For this matter I asked all members of the team what each one would like to do according to his interests and expertise. The answers I received made it possible to define each member's responsibilities and we agreed that each member should share the results of his work with the entire team during our meetings as follows:

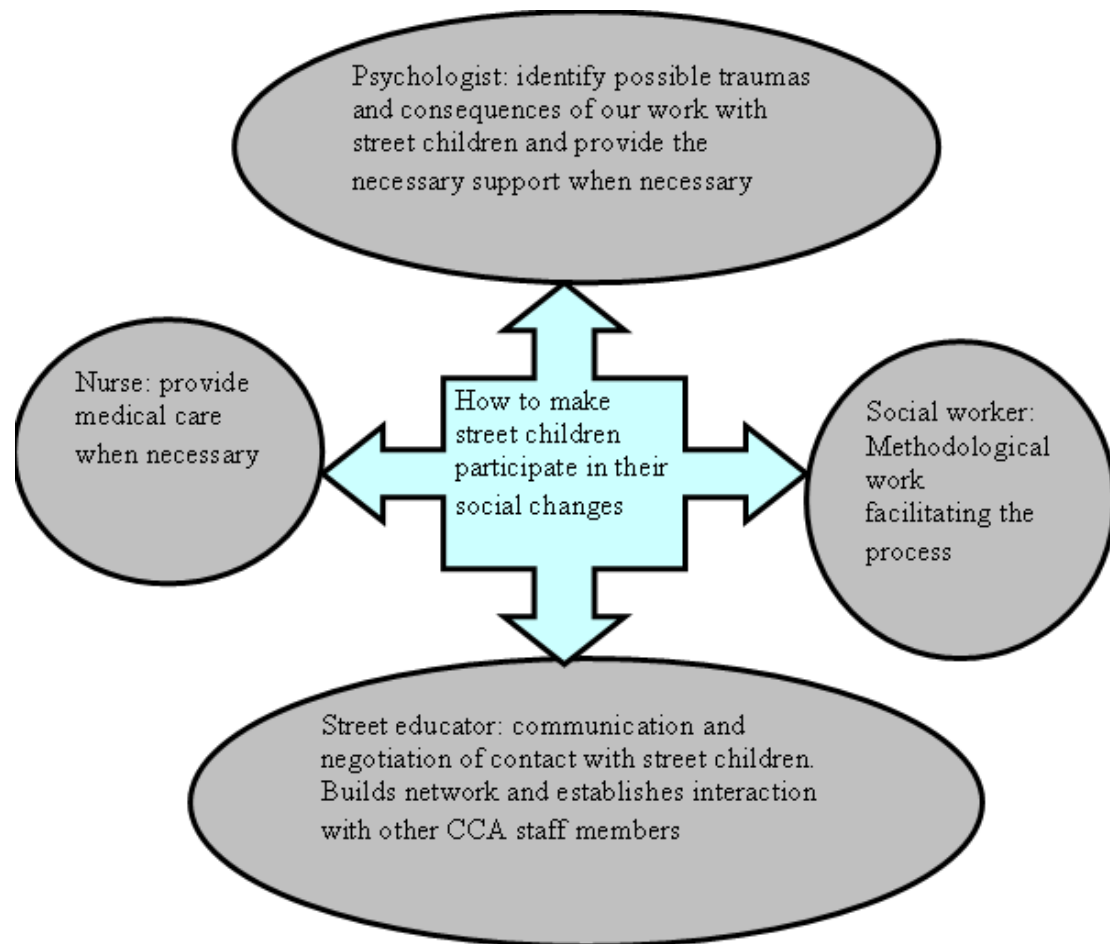


Figure 3. Responsibilities of the research team

The idea here was that everybody worked in total coordination, sharing information collectively. We as a team had to go all together to meet the group of street children and each one had his own responsibility in collecting as much information as possible in all the activities taking place.

6.4. The street children's communities and its realities

6.4.1. Stage III: Trip to street children's community and selection of the street children's working team

Given the lack of empirical studies in this area with similar prospects from the methodological point of view, and the state of the social development of the city of Maputo in Mozambique, I assumed that a participatory action research with a small sample of street children would provide valuable in-depth study material. Such research would help to highlight the utility of undertaking action research approaches in order to study and understand the behaviour of street children and promote social change through participatory action research under the lens of SCA methodological and philosophical settings.

This means that in the present study, the methodological assumption is that a maximum degree of participation of the researcher would produce a more valid account of the street children and their communities in matters of children's rights and possible solutions to problems identified by themselves as priorities. Associated with this assumption is the idea that if street children took part in decision-making and in planning their own course of live, through their active participation in this process, there would be a far better opportunity to achieve long-lasting results than if the decisions were made by others, for them and on their behalf.

However, my full participation did not mean for me to become a street child or to behave as such, not even to try to replace the street educators of the CCA, but to be a mediator in a process that would end up in a deep transformation of street children's lives and their peers (Quintana 1992). To try and ensure as authentic a picture as possible of the street children's activities and social environments, I decided to carry out direct observation and interaction for three weeks inside the CCA and on the streets. This period did not mean simply for me to be a permanent observer as an outsider, but as an active participant in all the activities that my research team members had to perform, as a real colleague and working partner. There were unplanned open dialogues with street children during the observations and also a deep relationship with the CCA staff. Relationships are some of the most valuable resources in a SCA participatory action research, because they create the ideal environment in which to build trust, care,

respect and commitment between members of the group working towards certain goals (Di Carlo et al 1997.).

During this research practice, all team members were treated equally and there was neither discrimination nor any hierarchy, and I was treated as a member of the working team without any differentiation. The following figure shows the steps followed in the fieldwork practice:

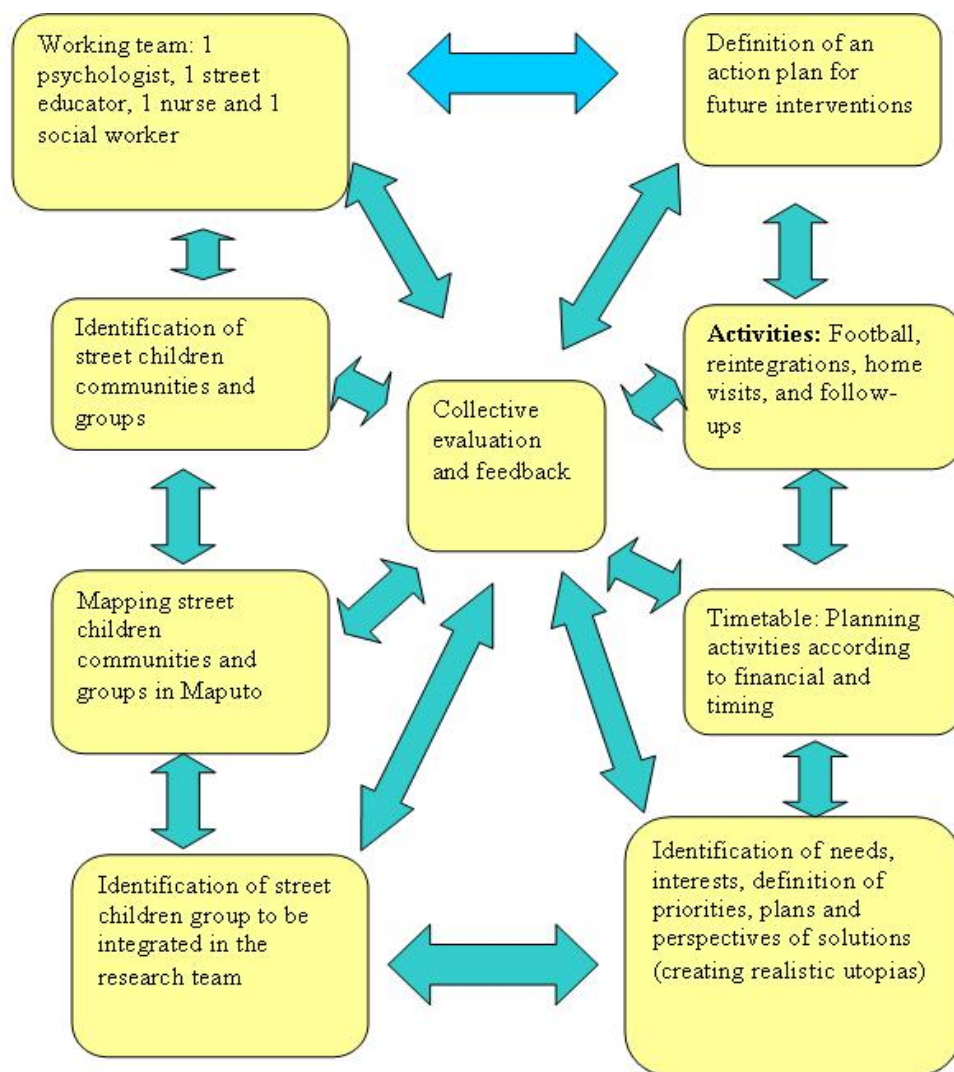


Figure 4. Fieldwork steps²⁸

²⁸ These steps are described in detail throughout the report. However, they are not separate from each other, but are interconnected.

6.4.2. Identifying and locating street children communities

6.4.2.1. Preparing for the street

The established research team had three meetings before the identification of street children communities began. During these meetings we needed to be sure about the understanding that each member had of the working methodology and that everyone had his/her responsibilities in mind within the working team and as independent individuals.

The 4th meeting took place on Monday of the 4th week of the fieldwork; it was 22nd of June. This meeting aimed at finding answers to the question *“how can we work with street children and get them committed to the construction of their own social life for a better future?”*

This question brought into discussion various aspects of street children's social life, where members of the research group mentioned many aspects that were so common to all research team members but that were worthy of thinking about, such as *the fact that street children lived in open environments or ruins, the fact that in some cases they lived in small groups of 5 or 6 and sometimes they had an adult acting as leader of the group, the fact that in many cases street children were permanently on the move, and the fact that this could influence the information we gather.*

There was a need to be aware of these facts and to avoid failures (Ander-Egg 1997; Di Carlo et al 1997) and a need to plan ahead how to act and the strategies to adopt in order to collect as much information as possible and then to define proper intervention tools for practice.

In conclusion, the research team, after long discussion, came to a consensus that it was very worthwhile to work during the night, as most of the street children were working during the day, and we would not have any information about their real location during the day and this idea would also give us a close to real picture of the social landscape of the street children in terms of their numbers and group members, as here we could isolate the so-called “children on the street” (Onta 1996; Richter 1988), who in many cases increase the real number of street children.

When we thought we were done with this meeting, an intriguing question was raised by the nurse; she wanted to know about our safety, as working with street

children during day time was not the same as working with them during the night. She also mentioned that there were some spots where street children lived with adults who were extremely aggressive and who might even attack us when we got there. These were very important questions we had forgotten to think about during our planning.

As we were running out of time, I asked team members if we could spend some more hours on this topic and solve it right away, if possible. All members were interested in participating, for having a feeling of freedom of expression, power possession in the decision- making process and the feeling of belongingness were some important issues concerning their disposition to participate and spend some more time than the time that had been planned for. We decided then to continue the meeting, and we discussed how to do this work and some of the following answers were given by members of the research team:

- *We should seek the help of the local police; it would be good for us to have 1 or 2 cops during our routines;*
- *No, I think that if we bring cops with us into street children's locations we will be arranging conflicts for ourselves with the kids, we know that they do not have good relations with cops. I think we should stick together during the work and nobody should stay far from the others, that is much better;*
- *I think it is better we inform the police about our intention and have them close to the place of our work, just in case we need them.*

This discussion took a really long time, and we were not able to finish the work by that day. Just to highlight how long it took, I could mention that we started the meeting at 11:00 am and by 17:00 we had still not finished, so I proposed that we should postpone the discussion to another day. We set up the next meeting for the following Friday noon, as we needed to start the identification of street children, which had been planned for the following week.

The following Friday, 26th June, we continued the conversation. It is important to remember here that these meetings had an important methodological use, namely the dialogical dimension, where all members of the working team had equal status to contribute, criticize, accept or reject each other's position (Freire 1983).

At the beginning of this meeting, I asked what each one had thought about security matters. The situation was complex, making it difficult to find a common position, and then I proposed to the research team the need to *trust* street children, that we should believe in street children and *believe* in ourselves. Of course it was dangerous to go out there and challenge street children's private lives. We should have *faith* and open doors for a *trustable relationship* with them and that was the main point of the work we were doing, because if we did not trust and believe in street children, then there was no point in trying to understand them and invite them to be members of this group.

To make this possible I proposed that we could all stick together as mentioned before and try to be as *honest* as possible with street children. I proposed a list of steps to be followed by us when entering a street child's living place:

- 1- Clap hands and ask for permission to enter;*
- 2- If they ask who we are we should first tell them that we came from the CCA and would like to visit them, to know about their situation and difficulties;*
- 3- After we are accepted to enter their living zone, we should also accept the place they tell us to sit or to stand;*
- 4- No cameras, cell phones, pen and papers. We should not write anything during the visit;*
- 5- We should tell street children about the purpose of our visit, about the research and about the CCA if they allow us to do so;*
- 6- If they do not answer our request to enter their place, or if they do not want us to come in, it is better not to insist. We should go away and try to go there another day;*
- 7- We should never take money or food to their places, because the food may not be enough for all and may start a fight between them;*
- 8- We should never make any promises to any street child, nor even think about giving special attention to any of them, because this can start a discriminative relationship.*

These points were discussed and agreed by all members of the research team. Then the time of locating and identifying street children's communities' had come, which was in the 5th week of the fieldwork, from 29th June to 3rd July.

6.4.2.2. The identification and location process: building empathy and mutual understanding

In a SCA action research approach, the methodology requires a process of going and returning to the first stage, and while the researcher tries to understand the phenomena in its different aspects, a permanent evaluation process takes place at the same time.

At this stage of the research process, the research team had to permanently review and promptly revise all the information we had, thus maintaining a consistent relationship between theory and practice in order to perceive that the practice stepped back and forth in the dialectical movement between consciousness and reality (Freire 1996). This means that a permanent process of discovery of the reality in which we were working took place, and we should and did not take a step having preconceptions about what we would encounter; for the entire team, each time was a singular moment, with its particularities, and we should take and give special attention to it.

When going into the street children's social environment, we started to build self-confidence in our capabilities as a team, working together and making sure that each member of the team felt integrated and protected by his fellow, not expecting special attention from one another, because we all were special to each other, and the children we met were also special to us, as we were to them. Associated with this, the team had the ability to ask questions and to accept the differences between each other. All these elements reinforced the structure of the team work throughout the entire research process.

The work at night under difficult situations created a stronger feeling of connection and attachment in the team. All this together is what I call the empathy and mutual understanding of the working team.

The identification and location of street children communities was made by looking at spots where street children lived and matching them with the area they belonged, according to the distribution of city areas as shown on the city map. The street educator

had a principal role in this, because he had more experience on getting in permanent contact with street children at the CCA and he knew most of these spots. However, for him and for the entire team, the majority of the places we identified were new, because he mostly knew the main places where street children used to be during the day time and never at night. This also confirmed our doubts about the location of street children during day time and night time, demonstrating the high mobility of most street children groups, as a security strategy.

This task was possible by making several rounds of the city area, making several visits to different places where children had been living and asking those children we met about the location of other places where we could find others. We had to walk long distances around the city during the late evening, from 7 to 10 p.m., every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the week.

In order to gather information on the number of children living in each zone, we first asked for authorization to pay a visit to the group sleeping or staying in the identified zone, and then we introduced ourselves as members of the CCA, since the majority knew what the CCA was. For those groups which did not know what the CCA was, we had to first of all explain what the CCA does and what we wanted there. The main argument was that we were there just to pay a visit and make sure that they were fine. Depending on the mood of the group and on the openness, we started a discussion about their lives, asking how they were feeling, what kind of problems they faced and in what we could help (from a CCA perspective). However, we had to make sure that we did not make any kinds of false promises or judgments.

We had to visit each zone (spot) two or three times in order to make sure that the information gathered on previous visits matched, because it happens that those children moved constantly or that they provided false information about the group.

During these visits, we attempted to gather information that could give us in detail the following aspects: the number of children in the zone, the name used by them to identify the zone, the names of the street children if possible, their ages²⁹, their interests, their difficulties and challenges.

²⁹ It was not often that we had the names or real names and ages of those children we met, but this was not the main point of the visits, so we did not give much importance to it, as possibly they had lied to us when they told us their names.

One important aspect of this activity was that we should at least remember some names of the children when we returned there, because if you start asking the name of the child again, he would start not taking you seriously, because he would notice that you had not concentrated or were even sufficiently interested in what he had been telling you.

So when we returned for a second or third visit, we made sure to call some of the members of the group by name and make sure they noticed that we remembered this aspect, no matter whether their names were false or not. This was also a part of constructing communication and trustful relations with the street children, making them feel comfortable by noticing that we did care about them and what they said. But not only did we have to remember some names, but also some aspects of what they had told us on previous visits.

This process of visiting and identifying the zones and the street children communities lasted for a period of five weeks; we visited 3 times per week, and 3 hours per day, which means that we worked on this issue for a full 45 hours.

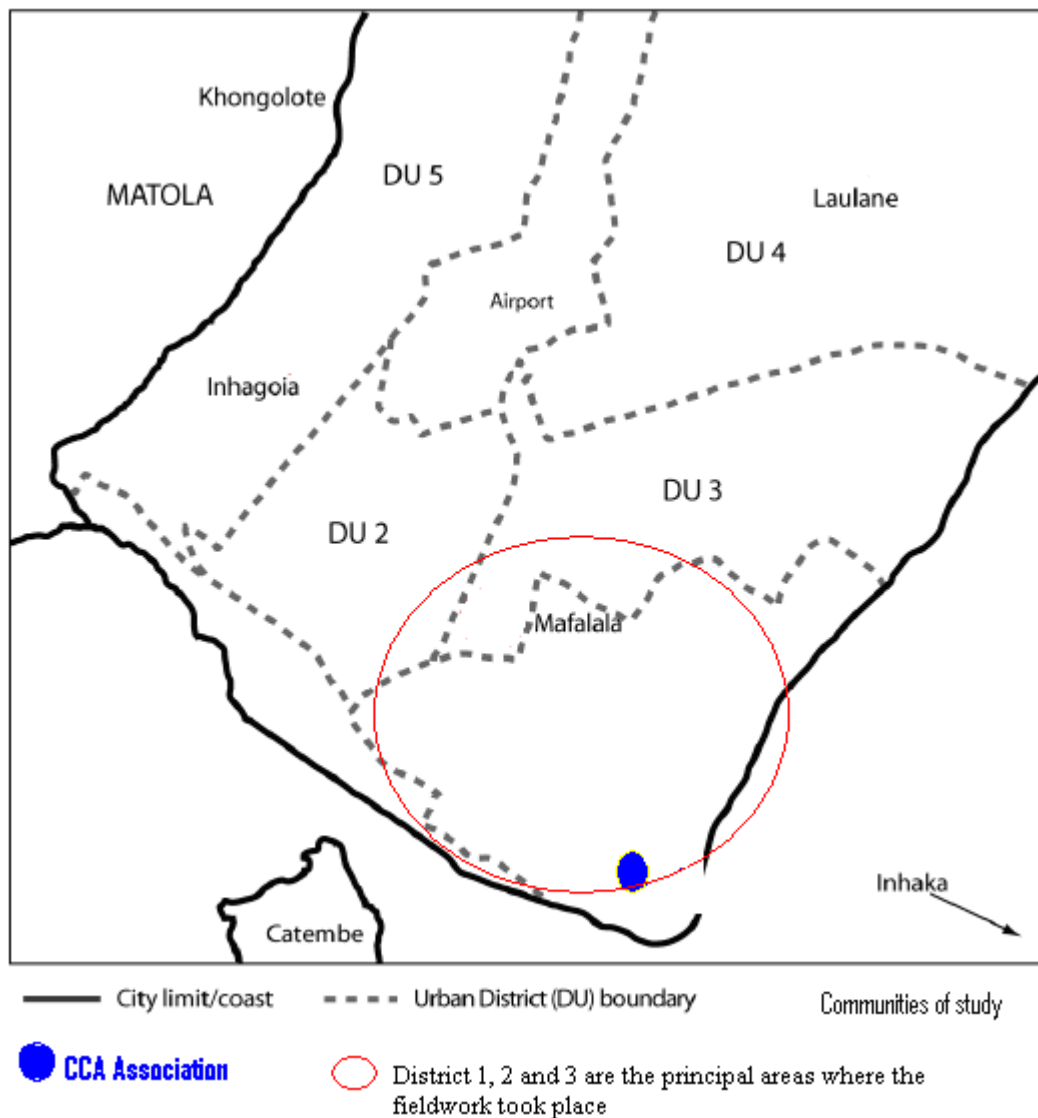
Methodologically, the identification process mainly used direct observation and interaction along with a dialogical conversation. Notes were taken after the visit and no cameras, sound recorders and videos were used, first of all because of safety reasons and secondly because, as a team we decided that we should not bring this equipment with us during these visits.

Another factor for not having this kind of equipment with us was associated with our previous contacts with the street children, where they mentioned they did not feel comfortable being photographed, since people had been coming to their zones and taking their photos without knowing for which purpose, and one day they found their pictures in newspapers and magazines. As they say, those people made money using them and they never even paid them for it.

The observational data during the visits and identification of communities and zones was registered on the map of Maputo, and the dialogues were written up in the fieldwork notebook as the activities occurred. Two data instruments were designed to assist in the accuracy of the information:

a) A map of the city where we put a note about the location of street children;

b) A notebook where we wrote the number of children living in that zone, their ages, names, origin of the children, the reason why they are on the street (if possible), their dreams and interests.



Map 4. Districts 1, 2 and 3 where the study took place

During this process we identified 5 communities of street children with a total of 42 zones/groups where 445 street children were living, of which 46 were girls and 5 were babies under 2 years old. 3 of these street children's zones/groups did not accept our visits and mentioned that they were not interested in having our visits during night time and we should not return there, otherwise something unfortunate would happen to us. We did not go there anymore and we were not able to collect information about these groups. The following table shows the distribution of street children by community and zones:

Table 6. Distribution of street children by communities

| Community | Zone/Group | Nr. children | Age average | Observations |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Polana Cimento | Miradouro | 6 | 7-13 yrs | Only boys |
| | Parque dos continuadores | 31 | 9-17 yrs | 9 girls |
| | Museu-casa assombrada | 32 | 0-19 yrs | 6 girls |
| | Polana Shopping centre | 5 | 9-13 yrs | Only boys |
| | Casa Algarve | 45 | 0-19 yrs | Only boys |
| | Esc. Comercial | 4 | 7-12 yrs | Only boys |
| | Jardim dos professores | 5 | 8-12 yrs | Only boys |
| | Girassol | 12 | 10-17 yrs | 3 girls |
| | Caracol-Miradouro | 3 | 10-16 yrs | Only boys |
| | Mao Tse Tung | 8 | 10-14 yrs | Only boys |
| | Barreiras | | | Visits rejected |
| | 24 Julho CNE | 6 | 13-16 yrs | Only boys |
| | Embaixada da América | 4 | 10-15 yrs | Only boys |
| Central / Downtown/ Baixa | Escuro | 33 | 10-17 yrs | 10 girls |
| | Ilha dos mutantes | 9 | 7-15 yrs | Only boys |
| | Jardim Tunduro | 17 | 7-15 yrs | 4 girls |
| | Estátua Mwa-nhoca | 12 | 7-18 yrs | Only boys |
| | Praça 25 de Junho | 8 | 7-17 yrs | Only boys |
| | Ferribote | 6 | 8-12 yrs | Only boys |
| | Marginal-Penha palhota | 12 | 12-19 yrs | Only boys |
| | Tunduro- Embaixada Inglaterra | | | Visits rejected |
| | Facim | 7 | 8-17 yrs | Only boys |
| | Repinga | 11 | 6-19 yrs | Only boys |
| Malhangalene | Malhangalene-escola | 4 | 10-14 yrs | Only boys |
| | Shoprite | 4 | 7-13 yrs | Only boys |
| | Mercado Janet | 9 | 7-14 yrs | Only boys |
| | Jardim dona Berta | 3 | 10-12 yrs | Only boys |
| | Praça do Touros | 4 | 7-12 yrs | Only boys |
| | 7 de Setembro | 5 | 7-12 yrs | Only boys |
| | | | | |
| Alto Maé | 7a Esquadra-Volvo | 4 | 10-17 yrs | Only boys |
| | Ferroviário-Campo | 12 | 10-17 yrs | Only boys |
| | Vitória | 8 | 9-16 yrs | 1 girl |
| | Ponto Final | 22 | 7-18 yrs | Only boys |
| | Ronil-Cemiterio | 9 | 9-15 yrs | Only boys |
| | Madjermane-Tudor | 18 | 10-22 yrs | 6 girls |
| | Estátua Ed. Mondlane | 6 | 10-14 yrs | Only boys |
| | | | | |
| Chamanculu | Xipamanine | 19 | 8-16 yrs | 3 girls |
| | Fajardo | 12 | 8-14 yrs | 3 girls |
| | Malanga | 5 | 10-14 yrs | Only boys |
| | Alto Maé-escola Ed. Mondlane | | | Visits rejected |
| | Assembleia-Ford | 7 | 13-17 yrs | 1 girl |
| | Praça 21 de Outubro | 4 | 11-13 yrs | Only boys |
| | Correios-fajardo | 6 | 10-16 yrs | Only boys |
| | Campo Micadjuine | 8 | 14-16 yrs | Only boys |
| | | | | |
| Total | | 445 | | 46 girls |

The five identified communities had similarities in terms of social organization; however, they were unique in terms of social networks. There were invisible boundaries between these communities, which meant that they knew who belonged or did not belong to each community and zone.

6.4.2.3. Back to the critical reading of social reality: The case of Malanga and Assembleia-Ford Zones

As mentioned in the previous section, SCA participatory action research is a dialectical movement back and forth, through active reflection and planning to uncover the aspects that have not been understood or underestimated throughout history (Freire 1996; Gillet 2006). We had a critical reading of the research context of our study, when I first introduced the CCA and the city of Maputo; however, it was time to bring into consideration a micro-understanding of a much more localized process within very specific areas.

After mapping and being able to locate the street children, their peers and communities, their real situation in terms of needs and expectations, it was time to select one group of street children to work with us. This was a difficult task since all of these 42 groups were street children, and they needed help on all levels.

To make things easier and simpler, we set up a meeting during the 10th week of the fieldwork, which was on 3rd August 2009. At this meeting, besides sharing, discussing, analyzing and evaluating the work that had taken place and the content we had, the main goal was to establish criteria to select one or two groups of street children with which we could work and plan an action plan. For this matter, with the working team I raised the question:

“From the 42 groups of street children we have met, which group do you think we can work with at the next stage of our work, and why do you propose this group?”

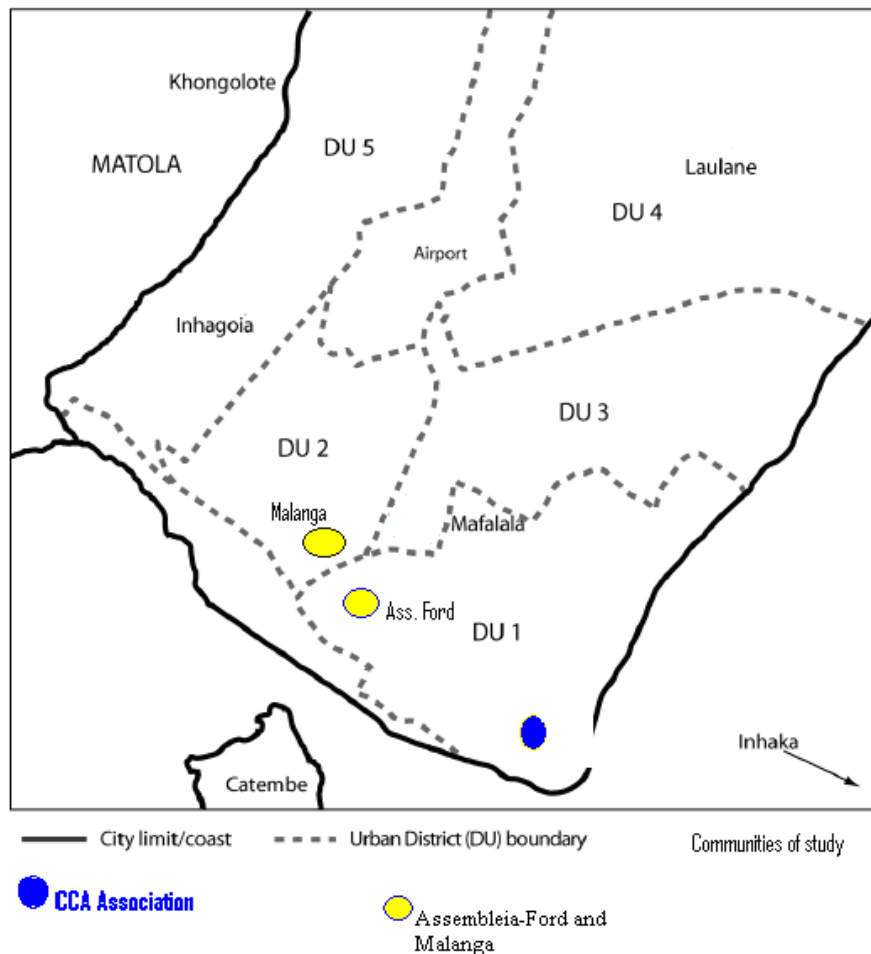
This question was followed by a clarification that, based on the known financial capacity we had and on the group structure, we could select a group of 10 to 15 street children to join the working team. A long discussion took place and many answers were given to my question and some of the selected answers are as follows:

- *Well, I think all of them are the same; we can randomly chose one and work with that group;*
 - *We can simply chose a group that is near the CCA, because we know them better and we can easily get to work with them;*
 - *We can choose a group of kids that is composed of the youngest ones; they are simple and easier to work with;*
- (...)

Many other positions were held, and I had to interrupt the discussion by proposing group criteria to make our work easier. I proposed that, based on our financial capacity and organizational capabilities, we should work with a small group, not more than 15 children and they should be at least living on the streets for not more than 2 years. The group should be integrated in a community that was closer to the CCA and had previous contact with the CCA for social support, health care and counselling. This could facilitate our communication with them and also could give us easy access to the group. Another criterion was that they should be at least living in a place that was easy to access.

The working team argued that it was close to impossible to find a group of children which was mainly composed of children who had been on the streets for less than 2 years, and if that was the case, we would have to make selections from group to group. This was a commonly understood sense, which I did not even think about. So the idea of a two-year maximum was not taken into consideration in the selection process.

After a detailed evaluation of the information we had, the working team agreed that the Malanga and Assembleia-Ford zones, belonging to the Chamanculu community matched with our criteria (see Map 5 for their location).



Map 5. Street children zones integrated in the research work

In the 11th week of the research work we decided to start visiting these groups to establish a relationship with them. It took three weeks to have their full acceptance. During our daily visits, we started by telling them that we were there to visit them, that we came from the CCA and that we would like to be with them for some conversations. There were days when we were accepted for a visit; other days we were just chased away, especially when they were in a bad mood.

Here it is important to remember that street children work together in order to protect each other; if one of the members of the group has a different position in relation to a specific issue, most likely all members will react in the same way. However, this did not happen in all groups of street children, but based on their group membership and thus their belonging to a community (community of street children), they tend to act taking into account the group as a unit.

This work was done during the day, and the rules were defined by the group entering these zones:

- 1. Not all of us should go at once; it can be disturbing to have visits of more than 2 people staring at them every day, so we should be divided into groups of two each. When one group goes to one zone, the other goes to the other zone.*
- 2. We should make these visits twice a week, to give street children the chance to get their work done;*
- 3. We should ask for authorization to enter their place before anything happens and be sure they are interested in communicating with us that day. If they say no to us, we have to respect that;*
- 4. Our visits should not be done during the time they are working on their own things, such as washing cars, caring for things or whatever, we should ask them which is the best time for them to get visited;*
- 5. We should not give them any kind of promise, nor even think about payment if they participate in the research. The idea is to convince them to take part in the research process freely with informed consent, knowing why, for what and how.*

Based on these rules, the group defined the best time for visits, which should be between 12 and 4 p.m. in a closer area, more preferably a neighbourhood garden, near their living zones, so that they did not need to spend money on transport or walk long distances from their social environments. The visits took place in a good atmosphere, with open dialogue, by sharing personal information, drinking some juice and eating some biscuits and sometimes by setting up play and games. We had great times and shared a lot of common things. However, some of the boys did not want to share any information about themselves with us; they just kept watching or participating in some of our games.

Associated with these meetings, we also had individual meetings with street children who belonged to the research group, from whom we could collect individual information regarding their needs, interests and reasons why they ended up on the

streets. During these meetings we made open interviews. There was no specific interview guide in this process; questions came through the conversation.

We provided medical help and counselling during these visits, since we got to know that Maria and Manuel had HIV/AIDS, and they needed immediate support. We could not and did not promise Maria and Manuel anything, but we directed them to the hospital, and we provided them with permanent check-ups to make sure they received good assistance at the hospital and at home (in this case the place where they lived on the street). The research group nurse and psychologist took the responsibility for getting institutional support from the CCA and its partners, and made sure Maria and Manuel had the medical support they needed.

We had the opportunity to tell these groups about our research project, the possibility of participating in the project and the implications of this research for them. They all agreed to take part in the research and wanted to give their best; the only thing they did not want was to see their picture in the research report, or I would have to pay them for it. I agreed not to use their picture in any advertisement or in any research document, but only for myself and my research team.

6.5. Between dreams and hopes: the possibilities and impossibilities of street children's dreams

6.5.1. Stage IV: Hermeneutic reading of street children's realistic utopias

I would like first to recall once again what I mean by realistic utopias in this stage. Gillet (2006) and Freire (1983) define utopias as possible and real future paths, possible of realization. In this sense, I mean that all possible and real (not only imaginary and impossible tasks) aims and expectations about the future that can be achieved based on accessible resources are realistic utopias.

At this stage, it is important to remember that in SCA action research, the goal is to promote the social participation of all members of the community or group in order to become subjects of their own social change (Freire 1996; Ander-Egg 1997), integrating theory and practice by working with people rather than working for people, and

focusing on the development of practical outcomes as a response to people's needs and interests.

This methodological approach emphasizes the distance from universal truths and for generalizations. It is thus an everyday life of practitioners that tries to experience the real context in which these actions take place, a real combination of theory and practice.

When I mention the hermeneutic reading of street children's social reality at this stage, I do not mean that this hermeneutic reading has started just at this phase of the research work; it actually started before I even went to Maputo to start the fieldwork, ever since the beginning of my planning and search for contextual realities regarding my research group.

When I got reintegrated with the CCA staff members, I and the working team started to plan and evaluate our possibilities to develop such a project, and we as a group became a unique team aiming at one and the same goal by acknowledging the contextual factors that might have influenced the work in the past and that might influence it in the future. However, at this stage, the goal is to deepen this hermeneutic reading into a more detailed perspective, attempting to understand the most detailed element of activities taking place.

This was the stage for a wider contact with the group and the research process. It implied more responsibility, since the results of such contacts could negatively or positively influence the final results of our activities. In terms of methods, this stage in general made use of dialogical intervention, where the combination of observation (participant and non-participant), open interviews with individuals or groups, and general conversations were brought together to build an ethnographic immersion (Quintana 1992; Freire 1994a; Freire 1994b; Freire 1988.).

At this stage, data was produced through individual and group meetings with street children and the working team, repeated two or three times with each one, depending on the communication environment of the day we established the dialogue. During the open dialogues, conversations and meetings, we raised open discussions about the reasons why people in general become street children, their difficulties and many other issues. In most cases, these conversations lead us to discuss the situation of the group of street children we were discussing with. Our focus during these conversations was first of all the establishment of relationships between the street children and the working

team, getting to know each other, each member's stories and backgrounds, reflecting on our problems as members of the same environment, with different stories and social lives. We all - the street educator, the nurse, the psychologist, the social worker, the street children - shared our stories of where we come from, why we were there, for what purpose, the difficulties we face in our everyday's lives and our expectations to overcome these difficulties and challenges.

The idea with these conversations was not for us to provide solutions to their problems, but to let them, together with us, reflect on their problems, sharing their problems with us and, if possible, to think about what could be done to solve these problems all together: in other words, as Ander-Egg (1997) mentions, to promote participation in finding solutions. So the goal here was to bring together street children as subjects of their social change, as active actors of their own social change.

Between all these dialogues, interviews and reflections, we find what Freire (1988) called 'dialogical action', meaning that the actors give and take ideas; they share knowledge, experiences, practices, etc., trusting and loving each other, without hierarchies or social positions in which one is superior to the other, or without one knowing more than the others. In this context all the participants were engaged on the same level of social interaction; they respected each other, and had the same rights and opportunities to give their opinion and be heard. This is the essence of the three basic strands of SCA: *pedagogical*, *social* and *cultural*, which come together into what Paulo Freire called the dialogical pedagogy where the subjugated people must be treated as fully human subjects in any political process (cf. Freire 1983).

In dialogical action, there is deep cooperation, and all of us as members of the team are able to focus our attention on the reality, in this case the street children push factors and possible solutions from their own perspective, so that we as a group may be able to transform it. It is in this dimension that we find the most powerful element of the pedagogical component of SCA as a methodology of social work, since all members of the work learn to deal with a certain issue after a clear understanding of the phenomena and take part in the transformation with responsibility.

The dialogical interviews brought to our understanding the social history of each one, our families, our dreams, fears and difficulties and our perspectives of people's lives. We had time to think what we could do for each one of us to make life better.

Street children shared their hopes of their future lives, their dreams and desires. That gave us the opportunity to know that 8 out of the 12 street children with whom we were working had lost one or both parents; 2 of them did not want to share information about their families and their perspectives.

Domestic violence and hunger (poverty in the extreme) were the most common push factors of street life. Six of these street children wanted to go back home and restart schooling, but needed much help to make this happen. They also mentioned the need for more activities during the weekends, so that they could keep themselves busy, because they were tired watching videos in some houses where they used to go in the neighbourhood. The table below describes the findings we had from our dialogical interviews with our street children members of the team.

Table 7. The street children's research team members

| Zone | Name ³⁰ | Time on street | Age | Dreams | Observations |
|---------|---------------------|--------------------|-----|---|---|
| Malanga | Paito | Since 2007 | 14 | Go home, go to school, have a family, have good clothes | Lives with grandparents, Orphan, came to street due to hunger at home |
| | Alex | Since 2008 | 12 | Go home and school | Lives with father and stepmother, came to street because stepmother used to beat him. |
| | Jaimito | Since January 2009 | 11 | Go home and school | Mother died, the father is in South Africa, lived with uncle. Came to street because uncle beat him a lot |
| | Pedro ³¹ | Since 2007 | 14 | Get a job and have a family | Orphan, lived with uncle who used to give him a lot of work and discriminate against him within his cousins |
| | Joaquim | Since 2008 | 13 | Get a job and go home (to his grandparents home) | Father died, stepfather used to beat him |

³⁰ Names are not original

³¹ Malangas group leader

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------|----|--|---|
| Assembleia-Ford | Manuel | Since 2007 | 14 | Have a family | Orphan, lived with grandparents. Came to street to join his girlfriend. Grandparents did not want to accept his girlfriend Maria |
| | Maria | Since 2007 | 16 | Have a family of her own, go to school | Orphan. Lived with uncle. Ran away from home because uncle wanted to have sexual relations with her and they rejected her boyfriend |
| | Kito | Since 2008 | 15 | Go home and have a job | Mother died, father used to beat him a lot. Ran away because was afraid of father, since he took some money from him. |
| | Titos ³² | Since 2008 | 17 | Get a job, get professional training | Doesn't want to share his past |
| | José | Since 2006 | 17 | Get a good job and have a home | Doesn't want to talk about anything in the past |
| | Pinto | Since 2007 | 13 | Go home, have a job and school | Got lost when he came with his grandmother from Beira (about 1,000 km north). Knows the way back home and no money to go back since then. Orphan. |
| | Sebastião | Since 2008 | 14 | Go home and school | Have both parents, ran away from home because he beat his sister and broke her hand. Is afraid of his father, who used to beat him a lot. |

6.5.1.1. The possibilities and impossibilities: hunting for practical solutions and establishing a plan

Three weeks after getting to know each other and establishing a good relationship with the street children, the research team was now complete: 12 street children, 1 street

³² Assembleia-Ford's group leader

educator, 1 psychologist, 1 nurse and 1 social worker. The next step was to start planning our action work according to the identified problems and proposed solutions.

In the 13th week of the fieldwork, on 24th August, we held a meeting to identify priorities. During this meeting I asked the entire team what their expectations were, what they were thinking to do, what their main interest was in order to act and to make their lives better, specially the street children. What was their interest in making their lives better, and how could we do whatever they wanted to?

As always, different positions came up. Six of the street children were willing to return home and they needed help in establishing contact with their families, as follows³³:

A. *“I would like to have nice clothes and return to my family. Here on the streets I want to have ID, because I have always troubles with the cops. I need to be documented. The only thing that makes things difficult for me is that my stepmother is a witch...she is very bad and she can kill me if I go back there, she beats me as if were beating a cow...that witch...one day I’ll kill her myself(...)”*

B. *“Would like to go back home, that is all I want. At home I would like to have my own business and also go to school. I would like to have a football team, to keep ourselves busy during weekends”*

C. *“I wish I could be at home with my grandparents, I just feel sorry for what I did and I just don’t know how to go there and ask for forgiveness...so if you guys can help me in this, that would be great...just help me meet my grandparents and ask for forgiveness for all that I did in the past”;*

D. *“Well, for me I would like to go to my village, the only problem is that it is so far away and I have no money for that and it has been a long time since I’ve been there. I am tired of this life...but I have no choice, do you understand? It is really stressing to stay here and I don’t even know how my grandfather is doing...I miss him so much;”*

³³ These quotes were collected during the meetings. The languages used for these meetings were Portuguese, Changana and street slang. Every member was free to express himself the way he thought would be best.

E. *“For me the most important is to have a chance to meet my father and ask his forgiveness, no matter what he decides, I am just sorry that I did bad things to my sister, I am not afraid anymore, I just need a chance to say this to him and if he thinks he’ll kill me, it is just ok...so if you can help me to do this...then I am ok.”*

F. *“I don’t know...if I had the means to go home and help my family, I would go right now...but at home life is very difficult and my uncle is too violent...but to tell the truth I just can’t manage if he doesn’t change.”*

Not all street children were willing to go home; each one had his own priorities and perspectives of life, and there were different approaches on the solutions to their problems. This is also related to the push factors of coming to live on the streets; some positions are as follows:

G. *“I think it would be fine to have a team here to play football. My priority is to have more space for fun, and yes, it is a great idea, to have a football team and play together every now and then. I am really tired watching those movies they show in those houses we used to go to. Me...going back home? No way...have I thought it is too dangerous for me to go back home...my stepmother could kill me... I hate her from my inner soul...I really hate her. If she doesn’t kill me, I can end up killing her, so it’s better I stay here and make my life here. It is difficult to be here, but we can survive anyway. If it was possible, I would like to get a job here and then find a room to rent, you understand, but that is impossible, I did not go to school and I know nothing...so I stay here and collect little by little”.*

H. *“I cannot go back home at all, forget about it...if you want to help me, just give me money and I will manage to solve my life and just leave me alone”.*

It is important to remember here that the main goal of this study is to address SCA as a social work practice approach, and the fieldwork itself aims at demonstrating the process of promoting the street children’s participation for their social change. This means that even those children who did not want to go back to their families had very specific plans to solve their situation and change their lives, and they were supported in

some way to pursue their goals. The financial capacity and professional access was the only limitation in this process.

I. *“I think if I had money, I would just buy land of my own and build my own house, start a small business and be fine at my own home...because at my family’s home, there is no place for me any more...so for me it would be best to help me find my own home and job”.*

J. *“For me the priority is to get a job and then I will be able to rent a room and then plan something better for the future, for now it is just impossible to do anything. I need to get something to do, if you could help us get something that would provide us with money and independence, it would be great”!*

These proposals were taken into consideration during the next meetings. Regarding the football team, we asked the Child to Child Association (CCA) to organize some activities for the children’s free time instead of letting the children watch TV every day when they come to the CCA reception centre. After we proposed to plan football matches we then formed football teams in the community of each street child. This was not very difficult; we had just to buy a ball and plan with the children. The CCA street educators went out onto the street, and planned this with children in different zones; after a week they had a football game scheduled for every Friday, and five football teams played in two different places.

Regarding the need of having IDs, we also contacted the CCA administration, and we also had the support of other staff members who were dealing specifically with this issue. So for those who wanted IDs and had health matters, we forwarded the responsibility to the CCA, because the organization already had a structure for doing this kind of work and providing this kind of support.

We then came to a situation where we had to start evaluating what was possible and what was impossible to be done at that moment and how we could make things happen. The entire group had to meet and make this kind of decision, and to reflect on what we were or were not able to do. I presented to the street children all we had in terms of infra-structures (car/transport with enough fuel to take anyone home if needed, some money to buy basic things for all those who needed them, if necessary). I did not talk about money that much, because this would result in an even more complex

reaction, so the most important thing was to tell them that we had the basic resources to help them but that there were things we could not do at all, due to the time we had and also to our financial capacity. But we could try to find suitable alternatives for all of us.

I mentioned to the group that we had six children who wanted to go home and we had the resources to make this happen, but we needed to find alternatives for those who did not want to go home due to their own reasons. We should think about what to do for them. The street educator mentioned the possibility of having those who do not want to go home integrated in specific activities at the CCA, such as theatre, dance, football and first aid. They could join these groups and start participating in training activities that take place at the CCA. The only thing we needed to do was to negotiate and contribute in some way to the CCA's resources in terms of ideas or even financially.

The idea was welcomed by the entire team and the psychologist volunteered to negotiate the issue with the CCA to make sure all six children could be integrated in some work group at the CCA and that there they could at least get some basic financial support, like pocket money when they have practices, performances or any kind of tasks on the streets. The CCA administration, after long negotiation, welcomed the proposal of creating new activities such as football and theatre games with street children. However, the CCA asked us to be responsible for providing equipment for sport activities (we bought two footballs).

One street educator was appointed to be responsible for planning and organizing football games with street children, and another one was given the responsibility to promote theatre activities with the HIV/AIDS activism group at the CCA. Maria and Manuel joined the HIV/AIDS counselling group because they had HIV/AIDS. That is when the first theatre group was created, after two weeks. The other 4 members of the group worked with other CCA staff members in planning football games and other recreational activities throughout the week.

Since our financial capacity was very limited, and as the time was also short, I focused most of my time on the reintegration of those who wanted to go home, giving the CCA the responsibility to provide direct support and follow-up to those who were integrated into the CCA's activity plans.

We concentrated on planning for the social reintegration of those who wanted to go back home and start a new life with their families. The first task was to get to know

their origins and establish contact in order to know the real situation at home. This was not so easy, because it was necessary to know the financial requirements of our home visits, the distances between the place they lived and their families' home, the family situation (structure, economic situation, and so on). For this, all of us got together in a meeting and planned how to make this happen and from where it would to start.

The street educator designed a table to collect information from the street children who wanted to go back home, and produced the following table:

Table 8. Origins of street children research team members

| Name | Place of origin | With who s/he lives | Economic background |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| Paito | Boane- Massaca: about 40 km from Maputo | Grandparents (grandmother and grandfather), 3 brothers and other 4 cousins (all of them are orphans) | Agriculture Grandfather is a guard on a farm |
| Alex | Boane village: About 30 km from Maputo | Father and stepfather; other 3 half-brothers (1 girl and 2 boys); 1 step-aunt (sister of his stepmother) | Agriculture Father sells construction materials in a local market |
| Jaimito | Bobole- Marracuene: 45 km from Maputo | Uncle and aunt; 5 cousins and another aunt (sister of his uncle's wife). The uncle is the brother of his father | Agriculture Uncle and aunt are farmers |
| Kito | Manhiça Village: About 75 km from Maputo | Father and stepmother; 3 half-brothers; 2 step-aunts (sisters of his stepmother). 3 cousins (both orphans) | Agriculture and livestock. All members of the family are farmers |
| Pinto | Beira- Bairro da Manga: About 1,000 km from Maputo | Grandmother and grandfather; other 2 cousins, also orphans of the family | Grandfather works in a fishing company |
| Sebastião | Zavala District: About 450 km from Maputo | Father and mother 2 sisters and 1 small brother | Father is a farmer and mother sells different goods in a local market |

6.5.1.2. Logistic matters

To start planning activities with all members of the research team, we first had to look at our financial resources, and see how we could reach the children's families. We had a 4x4 car, which could drive us wherever we needed; we had money for fuel and for other basic costs that a trip could mean. However, we needed to make sure that our visits

would not be too costly and would not become a burden for us. For this we together defined the priorities as follows:

- *We would first make visits to the nearest places (Boane and Bobole,) then we could go as far as we could (Manhiça, Zavala and Beira, if possible)*
- *We could ask other organizations for help too, and try to get some kind of sponsorship from them.*

We started by making home visits to Boane and Bobole, since they were closer and cheaper to travel to. We planned that the 14th week would be entirely devoted to home visits to Boane and Bobole, and during the 15th week we would visit Manhiça and Zavala. We also decided that we would go to Beira if we could get enough help from other people, and that we would all search for a way to get financial help.

We also planned that we would go as a team, not on an individual basis. However, we could not go all together to somebody's home without giving any notification in advance, so the first time we were to go to the area, there should be six or seven of us at least (the street child, 2 or three of his fellows, the nurse, the psychologist, the social worker), and after the visits we should have a meeting once a week to talk about what had happened and how it had happened, in order to evaluate the lessons learned and the challenges presented.

To make the work easy, we all started by planning who should go with whom as follows in the table below:

Table 9. Home visits and social reintegration plan

| Name | Place of visit | With whom to go | Observations |
|--------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Paito's Home | Boane- Massaca | The social worker, psychologist, street educator, nurse, Titos, Alex and Jaimito. | Buy second-hand clothes. Pocket money |
| Alex | Boane village | The social worker, psychologist, street educator, nurse, Titos, Paito and Jaimito. | Buy second-hand clothes. Pocket money |
| Jaimito | Bobole- Marracuene | The social worker, psychologist, street educator, nurse, Paito, and Pedro. | Buy second-hand clothes Pocket money |
| Kito | Manhiça Village | The social worker, psychologist, street educator, nurse, Pinto, and Joaquim. | Buy second-hand clothes Pocket money |
| Pinto | Beira- Bairro da Manga | The social worker, psychologist, street educator, nurse, José, Sebastião and Kito. | Buy second-hand clothes Pocket money |
| Sebastião | Zavala District | The social worker, psychologist, street educator, nurse, Maria, Manuel and Paito. | Buy second-hand clothes Pocket money |

We made this distribution so that at least one of the street children would know one of his fellow's home and would be able to establish contact with each other when needed. The choices were made by themselves; we just asked who would like to go to whose home to meet his family and to know where he comes from.

During the home visits we needed to buy some second-hand clothes for the street children, for them to travel comfortably. I provided some pocket money, which was meant to cover a two-day period without work as that they would have to be with the research team outside their usual environment. This pocket money was used to pay for a breakfast and a lunch, including water or something else that was needed during the trip. The total amount for the home visit was stated as 5 euros per member of the group, which meant 200 Mt in local currency.

6.6. From street to home: a story of success!

6.6.1. Stage V: Practical tools on the slow path for the social reintegration processes - The intervention act

To promote the participation of street children in their lives, to give them the opportunity to be themselves while improving their future together, with the support of the street educators, social worker and a psychologist, was the main goal of the SCA action research practice. The main task of SCA participatory action research was to encourage street children to hunt for solutions for their social situation and to be sure that they construct their future using their creativity, abilities and also the resources they had.

To make this possible, we started home visits with street children with the objective of establishing preliminary contact and creating a space of communication between the families of origin and street children who wanted to have an opportunity to get back home. We were to go there without any preconception of what would happen or what had happened before. The psychologist played a fundamental role in this; he had individual meetings with all street children members of the research team, where each one talked about his fears and expectations. These were very important meetings to booster their strength and provide them with enough courage and moral feeling to fight and keep going.

The psychologist reported that the street children were afraid of establishing contact with their families after such a long time without seeing their place of origin, which was associated with the reasons why they ended up on the streets. However, the opportunity they had to share their fears and thoughts was good enough to bring back their hope (Freire 1983).

Since our financial capacity was very limited, we asked different organizations working with children and on children's rights in Maputo for financial support, but the only help we had came from the CCA (fuel for transport) and some local businessman who provided food supplies and small amounts of financial help. Our fear was that we would encounter financial difficulties during the implementation of our activities.

We planned to spend two weeks on home visits and another two weeks would be for social reintegration processes. The fact that the entire group was multilingually

skilled and was able to communicate using local languages such as Ronga (Boane, Bobole and Manhiça), Xicopi (Zavala) and Xisena (Beira) was of profound importance in this. The figure below describes the steps we used in the social reintegration processes:

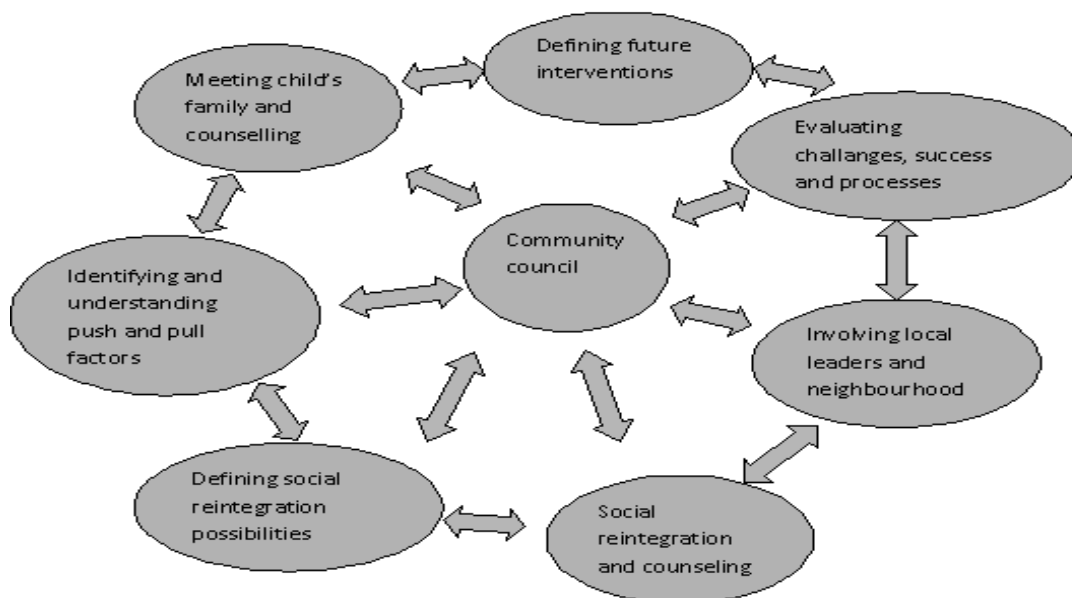


Figure 4. Social reintegration scheme

6.6.2. Reintegration in Boane

The district of Boane is located in the southern province of Maputo. It is bordered to the north by Moamba district, to the south and east by the district of Namaacha and west by the district of Matutuine and the city of Matola. The main economic activity of the district is subsistence agriculture, whose main product is corn.

6.6.2.1. Family contacts and reintegration

Before describing the process of social reintegration of Paito and Alex in Boane, I will first present a brief social history of each one separately in order for it to be possible to follow the process itself.

6.6.2.2. Paito's background history³⁴

Paito left his grandparents' home when he was 12 years old in 2007. Both parents are dead. According to him, the reasons for him to decide to leave home and go on the street are related to excess hunger. He mentions that his grandfather and grandmother are very old; they could not feed him properly and give him enough support for everything he wanted. He did not have enough food, clothes and not even time to play a little, because he had to work hard on the farm to help the family's income.

At his grandparent's home he lived with seven other children, three of whom are his brothers and the others are his cousins. The parents of his cousins died a long time ago; they were ill and he doesn't know what sickness they had.

His grandfather works on a farm nearby as a security man and there he gets a salary to pay their school materials. Besides that, only the farm provides the necessary food for everybody.

"I was tired sleeping without food at my grandfather's home. I thought that coming to the city I would get a job and be able to help my grandfather with home expenses. I was wrong; since I came here the only thing I do is clean cars, sell bottles and sleep on the streets. I have nothing here, and hunger is even worse than at home, but I just cannot go home, because I don't know what to tell my grandparents about what I have been doing," Paito said during our conversations.

6.6.2.3. Alex's background history

Alex came to live on the streets at the beginning of 2008. At his family home he used to live with his father, stepmother and 3 brothers (he calls them the children of my stepmother) and his step-aunt (the sister of his stepmother). The reasons why he decided

³⁴ All quotes and notes about the street children's life stories and family reactions were registered afterwards. The researcher had to reconstruct the story and rewrite it.

to leave home and come to the street are associated with the extreme violence he had experienced from his stepmother.

“She just used to beat me so much. I could not take it anymore,” he argues.

Alex’s father is ex-military and has been running his business in a local market. He sells construction materials there, and he has a stable income. Alex’s mother died long ago; he does not remember when nor why; he just knows she died.

“My stepmother is a devil herself, she and all my neighbours do not like me, she beats me like hell, and if I want food I have to work a lot, cleaning the house, washing dishes, bathing her children, things like that. She thinks I am her slave. That is why I prefer to stay here, because my father has no time to listen to me. When I tell him what is happening, he shouts at me and he says that I am a lazy boy and I do not know how to thank somebody who is taking care of me. So I decided to go away and let them be happy”. (Alex says during a conversation).

6.6.2.4. Facing reality together

On our first contact with families in Boane (Paito and Alex), it was a surprise for both families to see us going in, firstly because they did not expect to see their children so soon, and secondly because they were expecting us to be bringing problems, such as a report of a robbery or something committed by their children. To their surprise, after we were greeted, we introduced ourselves as members of the CCA, and explained what our purpose was at that moment and what we were expecting with our visit.

We explained at first the research project, the processes we had been going through and the challenges we were facing and then we asked the family leaders (Paito’s grandfather and Alex’s father) to allow us to keep contact with them.

Most important for us was their reaction; both families were keen to have their children back home, and for that matter they asked their children whether they were coming to visit them or if they would like to stay already, because for them it was

alright for the kids to stay with them. Mr. Matusse, Paito's grandfather expressed himself as follows³⁵:

"It is an honour for us to have our child back home, we were missing him and we did not expect that he was still alive, we thought he was dead already because it has been about 2 years since we have had any information about him. My son, if I have done anything wrong, I beg your forgiveness but never leave again, because you can kill us with heartbreak".

In the same way, Alex's father proposed to his son that he should stay home instead of going back to live on the streets, as follows:

"My son, where have you been, why do you do this to me? Is there something you are missing here at home, don't you have food or clothes? Why do you do this to me? You have chosen to stay on the streets maybe because I don't care for you well, but I beg you to forgive me and come back home, stay home together with your sisters here".

These expressions were given in a state of emotion and between tears and sorrow; the real feeling of those parents who cared for their children was indeed visible. However, it was not our decision to take the children back home; our goal was only to establish contact with their relatives and define the strategies to reintegrate them with their original families.

Based on these requests, we individually asked Paito and Alex whether they would like to stay. Their answer was that it would be good for them to stay because they were tired living on the streets and they wanted a better life.

We asked the parents if they knew why their children had run away from home, and what forced their children to move out from home and decide to stay on streets.

Both families pretended not to know the reasons for their children leaving home and staying on the streets. Mr. Matusse said that there were many problems in the family due to the fact that they did not have enough to eat; he did not have money enough to provide health care, food, clothes, and all that the children needed. He also

³⁵ Translated from Ronga. Names are not original

mentioned the fact that the school was so far away from their home and that Paito did not want to walk so far to go to school; that might be the reason why he had ran away.

Matusse's family is composed of 15 people, 7 orphaned children (his grandchildren), whose parents died due to HIV/AIDS three years previously (including Paito's parents), his wife, 4 nephews whose parents are in South Africa and never give a sign whether they exist or not, and his 2 sons (aged 14 and 19). This was a large family led by a 67 year-old man. The family income came from their small farm (2 ha) where they grow several vegetables and maize and from his work as a security man, earning 1,500 Mt (40 euros).

Our direct observations provided confirmation of these affirmations from Paito's grandfather. The family was living in a situation of extreme poverty; water was carried directly from the river (Umbeluzi) 1 km away from home, and there were signs of low nutrition levels in the majority of the children in the family. The children presented a picture of malnutrition due to a weak diet. This confirmed the answer given by Paito, that he left home because of hunger and because there was not enough food for all; he also mentioned that he used to sleep one or two nights without dinner at all. Paito had left home to seek a job in the city and be able to help his grandfather, but the streets of Maputo have only suffering siblings here and there.

We asked Paito and his family to think about what could be done to help them resolve their income problem and avoid other children running away from home and staying on the streets during the times to come. We proposed that Paito would stay, but we would return in a week to see what they had decided and to see how we could provide support to solve their problems.

Alex's father reacted in a different way; he argued that he did not know why his son left home in this way:

"...this kid seems to have demons; since his mother passed away he started behaving in a strange manner. I found a stepmother for him, to help me take care of him and his stepbrothers, but they seem not to understand each other. They fight a lot because this kid is always stealing things here at home and he goes out to play so far away that he comes back home very late, missing school and not eating with his stepsisters. His stepmother used

to beat him, just to teach him what is right and wrong. This might be the reason he ran away...because this boy has mental problems”.

Alex's father is an ex-military; he works in a local market where he sells car parts and construction material in a small shop. He also has an ex-military pension from which he gets about 3,500 Mt (about 90 euros) monthly. There were no economic problems in the family. The family was composed of 6 members (the stepmother, 2 stepsisters, Alex, a cousin and a step-aunt) and they had the minimum to live on. School was about 600 metres from home and there was running water at home, so they did not need to make long distances to get water. This is one of many similar families where domestic conflicts are the reason why children leave their parents and prefer to stay on the street.

We told the family that the reason why Alex ran away from home was associated with the fact that his stepmother used to beat him, as his father confirmed. We asked the father that, as Alex ran away because of being beaten and the father was then asking him to stay, what did he expect? The answer was that he should learn to behave according to the family rules, coming back home on time and helping his stepmother with home affairs. They also said that if he could not follow these rules he would get beaten just like his sisters did.

This was a difficult situation to solve, because violence is seen in many families as a way of socializing children to become the future men and women of the community, and violence is legitimated by families and communities as a better way to make children understand the wrong and right of what they do.

This brings into discussion the issue of power relations in most traditional African contexts and especially in the case of Mozambique. First it is important to remember, as discussed in Chapter II of this document, that in traditional African societies, a child does not belong exclusively to his biological parents (mother and father). They have obligations and rights based on the wider community, which at the same time has the responsibility for their proper socialisation.

In this reality, and in most Mozambican communities, the concept of family is much wider than the biological parents, assuming an extended group of kinship. That is why it is commonly said that a child in African societies belongs to his community, assigning the notion that traditional solidarity requires that a variety of persons exercise different and varying functions over children and that children are important and

valuable members of any community over whom all must, and ought, to take responsibility.

In a context where beating, shouting and allocating heavy loads of work is accepted practice within the community, the child is not seen as suffering, but as a wild and violent child, opposing the social structure of the community. This issue is discussed later on when dealing with perceptions of children's rights at the community level.

With regard to the possibility of staying at home with his parents, we asked Alex if he would like to stay and his response was positive but he asked us to visit him regularly, to be sure he is doing well, because he was still feeling afraid. He was not sure about his safety, and he did not feel comfortable with the situation.

We promised to make a permanent follow-up and come back as often as possible to make sure he was fine.

6.6.3. Reintegration in Bobole, Marracuene

Marracuene is a district in Maputo province, located 30 km north of Maputo on the Incomati River. It is bordered by Manhiça district to the north, the city of Maputo to the south and to the west by Moamba and Matola, while on the east is the Indian Ocean. The main activity of the district is concentrated on subsistence agriculture, whose main product is corn. However, tourism and commerce have recently been growing, due to its location.

Bobole is a small village located in Marracuene district, about 45 km north of Maputo and 15 km from the village of Marracuene.

6.6.3.1. Family contact and reintegration process and Jaimito's background history

Jaimito has been on the streets since January 2009, when he was 10 years old. His mother is dead and his father lives and works in South Africa. He lived with his uncle (his father's brother) and aunt, together with his five cousins. The income source of his family comes mainly from agriculture and nothing else.

According to him, he decided to leave home and go on the streets because his uncle used to beat him a lot.

“I was tired getting beaten for no reason, my uncle made me a slave, I was working all the time and the only thanks I got was being beaten. My father sends money to me but I never get it. I thought it was much better to come and stay here on my own and be free from the oppression at home”. (Says Jaimito during our conversation).

6.6.3.2. Jaimito at home

On our first visit to Jaimito’s relatives in Bobole we faced a serious situation. At the time we arrived at his home, nobody was there, they were on the farm (about 2 km away from home) and we were received by the neighbours. While waiting for Jaimito’s uncle, with whom he lived, the neighbours started coming and saying bad words to him. They said that he had came back to rob them again or he had been caught due to his robbery activities.

We had to keep calm, and the psychologist went over to them and asked them to come near and talk to us in a good way. The first thing he told them was that Jaimito had been living on the streets and had never been in conflict with anybody and that we were his friends. Two of the neighbours came to greet us and apologized for their behaviour and started telling us many things that had happened before Jaimito had left to live on the streets. She said things like:

“This boy is not a good person, he is a robber, an evil being is living in his body, and he used to rob our food when we cooked it in the pot. Even if you lock the door, he breaks the lock and goes in to take our food and other things. Sometimes he even takes clothes and plates to sell in the village. The last time he stole, he took his uncle’s clothes and sold them in the village, and then he ran away. He has never come back since then”.

The other lady said things like:

“I truly dislike this boy; I thought we were free of you when you left, I even thought you had a better place to stay with other robbers on the streets. What are you coming to do here? Are you bringing problems to your uncle?”

It is better you forget, your father has left you here and never came back, he is there living a good life in South Africa and you steal, bringing us problems here. Better you go back with your people and forget about us protecting you here, we do not need burglars, we are better off without you”.

Our position within this situation was not easy; we had to keep quiet and listen, calming down the boy so that he did not get agitated or angry. Luckily his uncle and aunt arrived from the farm. They came to us, greeted us, but with a certain amount of surprise. They were expecting nothing good at all.

We introduced ourselves as members of the CCA and we explained the objectives of our visit. We told them that we had known Jaimito for about two months, and we believed he had been a good boy; we said that nothing wrong had brought us there, the only objective of our visit being to get to know his family and he also wanted to see them and to know how they have been doing.

Mr. Palate is Jaimito's uncle, his father's brother. He is 46 years old. Mrs. Marta is his aunt, his uncle's wife. She is 34 years old. They have 5 children (3 daughters and 2 sons). Their income comes mainly from agriculture; they grow maize, vegetables and sugar cane. Every day their elder son stays in the local market selling vegetables in order to get money to buy sugar, soap, washing powder, rice and other things they do not grow on the farm.

We told Mr. Palate that we went to visit his family together with Jaimito because he asked us to. We told him that the boy had been living on the streets and that he was missing his family.

Mr. Palate's reaction was as follows:

“This kid is my nephew as he has told you and I live with him since he was 6. His mother died when he was 4 and his father left him with me to go to South Africa in order to search for a job, but since he left in 2004 he has not come back, he forgot his son and us. But that is not a problem at all, the problem is that this kid is lazy and badly behaved. He used to steal things here at home and in the neighbourhood, and sometimes if you tell him to go to the market or to the farm, he disappears. He is only 11 but he behaves

like a devil. He has lots of problems that I can't tell you in a short time...you need time to understand him. I am happy that he came back to visit us and we are even open to receive him back home if he changes his behaviour, because we cannot feed a dog at all".

We had a long conversation with the family; for about five hours we stayed there talking and walking around his neighbourhood, but we did not talk about the possibility of Jaimito going back home.

We needed four visits, once a week to make them feel comfortable with Jaimito and make them think about the possibility of Jaimito going back home for ever. During our visits, we established open dialogues and we invited other members of the research group (the other street children) and some neighbours to participate in our dialogues. The street educator talked about children's rights and the problems children face on the streets, the implications of living on the streets and the impact of this for the country and for the children themselves. The other street children told about their problems in a context of open dialogue. During these dialogues, we brought food for our lunch and we cooked together with the family.

These dialogues were very important, because as Palate's family and the neighbours became aware about the situation of Jaimito and other children who lived on the streets, they started understanding the issue of children's rights and how differently they used to understand this in their environment. Mr. Palate even said that:

"I did not know that when I hit my children I was doing anything wrong, here it has been common to beat children as a way to teach them what is wrong and right. Children need more attention and now I am sure things will be better in the future, at least for my children. I did not know that there were so many children and there were many problems similar to mine in other houses, I thought I was the only one suffering with my children".

After five weeks of negotiation, we asked Mr. Palate whether he would receive Jaimito and whether there would still be a problem if the boy came back home. He answered that he had no problem with that, and he would make sure he got the best, even if he could not afford to take care of him alone. He needed help in his schooling and if possible he would like to have support with his farm, because it was not giving him enough income at all.

We did not promise anything but we told him that we could look for possible solutions and if we get anything to help we could immediately help his family. We told him that he could be visited by one of the team members every week in order to find out whether the boy was behaving well and if there was anything that needed to be done immediately. That is when Jaimito got reintegrated within his family.

6.6.4. Reintegration in Manhiça

Manhiça district is located in the northern part of Maputo province. Manhiça is a little village that is almost 90 km from the capital city of Maputo. The village is located in a little plateau area, surrounded by the Inkomati River, and it has an area of 250 km² with 156,000 inhabitants.

The main sources of income in the community come from agriculture, in particular sugar cane as well as informal trading. A large group of the Manhiça male population spends a lot of time as migrant workers in South Africa. Women tend to be the heads of households involved in family upbringing and income-generating activities.

Manhiça hosts a camp of about 200 Burundi refugees, and it faces many of the problems typical of small towns in southern Africa, such as unemployment, malaria and HIV/AIDS, lack of relevant learning opportunities, illiteracy, male migration, lack of access to information and communication facilities.

6.6.4.1. Family contact, reintegration process and Kito's background history

Kito is a 15 year-old boy and has been on the streets since 2008; he has been on the streets for almost 1 year and a half. His mother died about 10 years before he left his parents' home in Manhiça. He tells a story of having a stable life, with everything he wanted, but the only problem was his father's excess violence. According to him, his father is extremely violent when he gets angry; you never know what he is going to do.

“My father is a terrible man, when he starts beating somebody he never stops. I had a need of some money to buy some sandals. I knew I would pay back that money after I finished a job my neighbour gave me, but she did

not pay me and my father found out that I had taken his money. I got afraid and decided to go away, because my father would beat me to death. I was terribly afraid and I am still afraid of him...he is a very mad man. I remember the times he used to beat my mother, he even broke her hand once...he is mad and I could not face him, so I decided to stay here in Maputo. But now I notice that this life is nonsense, I wish I could have forgiveness from my family and return home, this life is really bad”.

Kito’s mother is dead; he lived with his father and stepmother (with whom he had really good relations), 3 brothers, 2 step-aunts (sisters of his stepmother) and 3 cousins (both orphans). The source of income of his family is basically agriculture and livestock.

“My father has many cows and pigs and he also works for the local administration”.

6.6.4.2. Meeting the family

The contact with Kito’s family took place during the second week of Jaimito’s reintegration process. When we got there, the father was at work and only his stepmother was at home with his sisters and brothers. Kito had 1 brother and 2 sisters and he was the second in the family. His stepmother had no children with his father; she was pregnant and soon he would have another brother at home. Kito’s mother had died.

Mr. Paunde is 44 years old and is Kito’s father, and Mrs. Rabeca is 38 years old and is his stepmother. Kito’s father works at the Manhiça Municipality Administration, and he and his wife have a farm where they grow vegetables and crops. He did not want to tell us about his income, but as we could notice that the family is stable and have a better financial situation than many other families in the neighbourhood.

We decide to wait until Mr. Paunde had come back home before we started any kind of serious conversation and at 15:45 the father back home. When Kito’s father came home and saw his son, he started crying; he cried a lot because, according to him he had been very worried, he had been to the police, to hospitals and many other places searching for him and could not find him. He said that he thought he was dead and had no more hope at all of seeing him.

After we were greeted, we introduced ourselves as members of the CCA and we told him about the research we had been doing and the objectives of the visit. We told him also that we came over because Kito asked us to come and meet him, and ask for forgiveness for the fact that he stole his money and he was afraid of coming back home because his father could beat him.

The first thing he said was:

“I am thankful to you all that you brought my son, it is almost one year since I last saw him and I did not have hope anymore. I would like to ask my son to forgive me if I did anything wrong to him to the point that he run away from home. Even if I had done such a bad thing, it would have been enough to ask for forgiveness and I would have forgiven you my son. We suffered a lot here, we spent money searching for you in hospitals, in Maputo hospitals and police stations, we searched for you at your friends’ homes and found nothing, and we were worried about you. Why did you do such a thing? I beg you my son, if I have been a bad father, tell me, if you have missed food here at home tell me, if there is anything wrong with you let me know please, but forgive me for everything”.

The psychologist told the family about the situation many children experience on the streets, the problems they face and the reasons why many children run away from home and prefer to live on the streets. Physical violence has been one of the most common factors to influence children to live on the streets, along with hunger and child labour. He explained to the family that it was necessary to have more dialogue with the children instead of violence (physical and verbal), because children easily get traumatized and they can become more dangerous to society.

After a long conversation, we asked Kito if he would like to stay with his family. Kito was keen to stay home and his answer was yes. Mr. Paunde offered us help in other activities and asked how he could help us with our work and what could he do to support our work with other children. He also mentioned that he would like to participate in other activities where he could take part in things like this, because he had not enough to pay for what we had done for him.

We told him about our difficulties in getting to Beira, to look for Pinto’s family, and we told him that we would like Kito to participate in our tour to Beira if there was

no objection from the family. We promised that we would visit his family in the future as much as we could, as long as our financial situation could cover the trips.

Mr. Paunde told us that when we were on the way to Zavala and Beira, we could pass by and he would provide fuel for the entire trip, and he would like to offer some money to help other children. For him, money was not a problem; he would only like to give a contribution to the work we were doing and help other children as much as he could. This was how Kito got reintegrated within his family.

6.6.5. Reintegration in Zavala

Zavala, also known as Quissico, is the capital of Zavala district in Inhambane province, located about 400 km north of Maputo. The town lies on the coast of the Mozambique Channel and the EN1 road. It is known for its lagoons and for its musicianship. The Chopi ethnic group is numerous in Zavala.

6.6.5.1. Family contact and reintegration process and Sebastião's background history

Sebastião is a 14 year-old boy who has been on the street since 2008, one year living on the streets now. He has both parents, and had a good life there. Everything in his family was good until the day he decided to leave and run away to Maputo. According to him, he left home to stay on the city streets of Maputo because he committed the mistake of hurting his sister.

“It was an accident; I did not want to hurt her. We were playing and then she said bad words about me, then I beat her...she fell down and broke her hand, because she was standing on a branch of the tree. I was afraid of dad, about what he would do to me, so I decided to run away. I got a lift in a bus, where I could help carrying stuff for passengers and came to Maputo. I thought Maputo was paradise, that I would get a job and be able to go to school. But unfortunately I ended up living on the streets, no school at all. The only thing we do there is to eat trash and work for a piece of bread. I cannot go back there, my father can kill me, and he loves my sister a lot”.

He lived with his parents, 2 sisters and 1 small brother, the youngest in the family. The source of family income is agriculture. His father is a respectable farmer and the mother sells many different goods in the local market.

6.6.5.2. Between tears and fears

Our arrival at Zavala was marked by the deep impression that the cultural landscape and the beauty of the terrain made on all the team members. However, even with such richness, most of the local resources have not been explored, and the local population still lives in extreme poverty. Most of the local infrastructure was made to satisfy the needs of tourism, which does not even make the local people's lives any easier, since the results of such activities only gives more chances to those who can afford it. In this context, tourism makes the local people's lives more expensive, as the cost of living rises more and more. The outcomes of such national and international tourism activities are not visible in people's everyday lives (Marrengula 2009).

Sebastião's family lives about 11 km from the village centre, and it is very difficult to get there. People travel from their homes to the village centre on foot or use some local trucks that come and go every 4 hours.

We met Sebastião's uncle in the village; he sells handcrafts in the local village market and lives there where Sebastião's parents live, 11 km away. It is a long journey to travel every day. When we got there, he was very happy and he decided to go home with us, to welcome us together with his family. We did not talk so much with him during the journey; we kept listening to his stories of his childhood and the effects of war in that area of the country.

After driving for one hour between coconut trees, we finally arrived at Sebastião's family's home and we were received with happy shouts and whistling. It was a party moment even before they knew why we were there, for the simple fact of seeing their son coming from the city. It was about 4:00 pm when we got there, and Sebastião's father and mother, together with his two sisters and brother, were having a meal. Most of us did not understand what they were speaking, because we did not speak Xichopi, the local language. but luckily the nurse, who came from the same region, spoke it and she translated everything for us when possible and necessary.

It is a tradition in that area of Zavala not to greet strangers before they have eaten, taken a bath and rested enough. So we were given warm water for the bath and asked if we were in a hurry. We answered no, and the younger brother of Sebastião's father offered to kill a pig for us that night. I said we should not kill anything that night, but the nurse advised us that it would be a big mistake to reject such an offer, because in that area it is a sign of respect to accept what they give to you, no matter what it is. So we had to accept it, and Sebastião together with the street educator killed the pig and started preparing the meat; we ate some portions which had been grilled and the other portions were saved for the next day. Since it was late, we were put into different rooms to sleep and wait for conversation until the next day.

The next day, early at 5:00 am, everybody was awake and we helped to fetch water in pots and to clean the dishes. It was a daily routine which was done there every morning. After that we had breakfast, and it was only after breakfast that we had the opportunity to meet the entire family; that was around 9:00 am.

There were more than 40 people in the house, some coming from the neighbourhood, but all members of the family were there, including uncles, grand-uncles, grandparents, cousins and the traditional leader of the village. There were many people present, and they all had come to see us and hear why we were there with Sebastião.

We started by introducing ourselves as members of the CCA; we explained what the CCA was and what we were doing in our research. We explained our goals with our visit and our expectations. We also explained how we met Sebastião and introduced other street children with whom Sebastião was living on the streets. We told them Sebastião's version of the reasons why he left home and went to Maputo to live on the streets and at the same time we explained some points about children's rights issue. The entire family listened and asked questions when they did not understand something.

After a long process of introduction, we asked the local leader to give us his perception about what we have been saying, and he reacted as follows:

"I am pleased that my son has had the luck to find people like you, and that he has come back home. We did not know where he was and what might have happened to him, and of course, it is true that he had a fight with his sister and broke her hand. But as we used to say, never run away from

problems, you have to face them and get courage to solve them; see now, you have suffered more than what your father would have done to you if you had stayed at home”.

The nurse also asked the father to say something and the father was not able to say anything; he was just crying and crying, from emotion of course. In between tears he was able to say “*I thought I would never see my son again*”, and kept on crying.

This was not a process of questioning why or why not; I asked to the nurse (our spokesperson here) to tell everybody that the idea is not to answer what or why and why not, but to share our experiences and let them know that their son is sorry for what he did.

Sebastião was quick in trying to give an answer, but words were not enough to say what he was feeling and thinking; he only started to cry and say “*I am sorry, I was wrong and forgive me*” in his language.

When Sebastião started crying, we did not have a chance to hold back the situation, for father and son were already hugging each other and his brothers and sisters came along too, to share their hug; even the sister whose arm had been broken by Sebastião went there to hug her brother. It was a moment of great emotion and we decided to let things happen by themselves and not to interfere. We were also hugged by family members and Sebastião’s father.

That day we thought, after all the emotional upheaval, we would relax somewhat, so we decided to take a sight-seeing walk around Zavala. We stayed in Zavala for four days, learning some of the local language and sharing our cooking skills with the local people; we shared some activities such as how to make food-processed conserves like dried meat, fruit jam, and dried mangoes. We had several families from other villages who came to see us and get to know us, and they were all welcome to join in our activities.

But the main idea of taking this much time with the family and all these activities was only to establish a relationship, to build strong ties between the CCA, the research group and that child’s family. With this, we make sure that the social net is fully rebuilt and that the family is ready to accept Sebastião back home without reserve or other odd feelings about him. This was necessary, because we were sure that we would not be able

to get back there again to make a follow-up of the situation as it would have been very costly to make such a trip back to Zavala, with the resources we had.

On the night before the fifth day, we had a meeting with the family members, Sebastião's mother, father, grandparents and his brothers. We told them that we would be leaving the next morning on our way to Beira, and that we would not be able to get back there to make a follow-up visit. We kindly asked if we could leave our phone numbers just in case they needed some help, and we also took one of the family member's phone numbers, to keep contact. This is how Sebastião got reintegrated with his family.

6.6.6. Reintegration in Beira

Beira is the second largest city in Mozambique. It lies in the central region of the country in Sofala province, where the Pungue River meets the Indian Ocean. It has an estimated population of 546,000 in 2006. It holds the regionally-significant Port of Beira which acts as a gateway for both the central interior portion of the country as well as the land-locked nations of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi. Beira was originally developed by the Portuguese Mozambique Company in the 19th century, and directly developed by the Portuguese colonial government from 1947 to 1975.

Tourism is a potential industry for Beira, but returns are limited. Potential tourist attractions include the cathedral, lighthouse, Macuti Beach and the Grande Hotel Beira. North of the city is the Gorongosa National Park. There are few restaurants or hotels of a tourist standard and security is poor in some areas.

6.6.6.1. Family contact and reintegration process and Pinto's background history

Pinto has been on the streets since 2007; he was 11 years old at that time. Now he is 13 and he says he has made so many friends on the streets. According to him, the reason why he was on the streets was because he got lost when he came with his grandmother from Beira (about 1,000 km north).

“We came to Maputo in 2007, it was June and we had school holidays. I and grandmother came to visit my uncle, but when we got to the bus station I did

not see which way she went. It took many days searching until I realize that it was impossible. I stayed some days at the police station, but those police guys were so rude to me, and for many days I did not have food at all. I started to look for better alternatives to live, which is when I started to know street life. I met a guy here who helped me a lot, he used to share food with me and everything, but he went away, I don't know where to. I continued here, to survive I had to carry things at the market and help in washing cars. There I sometimes have food and other times there is nothing. But I survive. If I had money to pay the bus, I would definitely go home, because I am tired of this life".

Pinto's both parents are dead; he doesn't know what happened to them, but knows only that they are dead. He lived in Bairro da Manga, Beira, with his grandparents and another two cousins who were also orphans. His grandfather worked in a fisheries company and had enough to maintain the family, besides of the fact that all his uncles used to send money there every month.

6.6.6.2. The sad reunion

Arriving in Beira was a big challenge; after a very good stay in Zavala, we thought it would be much better for us to save time and money, and go straight to Beira. It was a good idea, because we saved about 450 km from our trip. From Zavala we drove to Beira in about 14 hours; it was quite a long trip.

When we got to Beira we did not know from where to start, because Pinto was kind of afraid or nervous; he had not talked and not even shared anything with us for hours. It was late at night, about 9:00 p.m., and all we needed was to rest. We started 'hunting' for a place to stay and with the help of some people we found on the streets we were able to find a cheap hostel that cost 250 Mt (about 7 euros) a night per single room, and we paid them with no problem. We also asked to reserve the same rooms for the following three days, as we did not know what would happen to our work in Beira and we were in the middle of the second largest city of Mozambique.

We slept well, as everybody reported, and on the following morning our energies were well recharged. Pinto and José were playing cards when we woke up and they seemed to have recovered from the trip.

We had a small meeting before we made ourselves ready for the the street to look for Pinto's family, so I asked all members of the team who were there to make time to share their feelings and thoughts. This was a moment to express our experiences in Zavala, to share our fears and thoughts about what had happened.

For instance, Maria, who was travelling with us, said that she had had a real experience of having a family and she wished she could have a chance to meet her family as well, that she had learnt a lot, but the problem was that her family was not as good as the other families we met; she said that if she went back home she would die of hunger and people would start discriminating against her, just because she is HIV+.

Pinto in his turn said that:

“I am afraid of the moment I will meet my grandmother, it has been a long time and I don't know if she still lives in the same place. Things have changed a lot here, buildings, new houses and many other things...I am afraid I will not find my grandmom and I won't be able to be here. I would like to stay here and in the future work with you in helping other children, because I see that we are suffering on the streets and we need to work together to help other children”. This was a good dream, but to make it come true needs a lot of effort.

The conversation had several important results, but most important of all was that we could booster the team's self-esteem, share our fears and exchange ideas about how we could work during the day. We set up some important steps together, such as:

- *Since Pinto does not remember the city very well, we should first identify the principal places he knows well such as his primary school where he studied two years ago, the church and the market;*
- *We should get a local map and locate those places there*
- *We should consult the local police and introduce ourselves and get to know how things work here;*

- We should try to save time and energy, if we see that we do not find the place at all, much better to return back to Maputo and find another way to help Pinto;

- Then we should go for it, to search for Pinto's grandmother.

Pinto told us that he had studied at Manga Primary School³⁶, in the city of Beira, and that was our first target to locate, because we thought that if he had studied there, it would be possible that he might have lived near the place where he studied, or we could gather some information from the school office.

But before we went to the school we made a visit to the local police station and introduced ourselves. We introduced ourselves to the police station captain as members of the CCA; we explained our work in Beira, and we told him about the research process and Pinto's story. After long introductions we had then the opportunity to ask for information about where to locate the Manga Primary School where Pinto had studied.

Actually, this was a good initiative, because the police officer asked two policemen to take us to the school and provide us with all the help we might need in the process. When we got to the school Pinto remembered the way home, because he used to go on his own from home to school and vice-versa. So we did not need to enter the school and we walked straight home, about 2 km from the school. The road to the house was so small that we could not drive on it, so we had to walk.

On our way home, Pinto met some boys and girls who knew him and they started talking with him; we also met some adult people who knew him and who just admired the fact that he was there. Most people were surprised, because they had been told that he had disappeared. With the child trafficking phenomena, people believed that he would never come back.

Finally home, a man came along and received us, gave us chairs and greeted us, but it seemed that Pinto did not know the man and people who were living at his home. The neighbours also came to see Pinto; they had been talking in Sena with the man. He also did not know the boy, but the neighbourhood knew him very well. It was a strange

³⁶ Escola Primária da Manga

situation, because suddenly the man started crying and came to Pinto; he gave him a big hug, but did not say a word. Then a lady came to us and joined the group of neighbours who were there talking in Sena language. Our psychologist translated for us what they were saying.

After waiting for a period of about half an hour, with people crying for a reason we did not know, some other people came along that Pinto knew; they were his uncles who lived somewhere about 5 km away from there. They had been informed about our arrival and they came as quickly as they could, that is what they said when they came to greet us.

First they invited us inside the house, and the oldest man of the group, named Samba, also a member of the family, started talking to us as follows:

“We are glad to see you here with our son, we do not know how you found him, but we are glad to see him. What can we do for you? I am his uncle and all people you see here are family members, so there’s nothing to fear”.

We introduced ourselves as members of the CCA; we told them about the work done at the CCA and the research project objectives and activities we have been doing. We also explained how we had met Pinto and his interest in coming home. We asked the family if there was a problem for them in taking him back, no matter what had happened.

Mr. Samba told the man who received us, who we found out was Pinto’s father’s brother, so his uncle, the one they went to visit when Pinto had got lost in Maputo, to explain to us what has happened. His name was Arnaldo, and he started talking in such a very sad manner that we thought they did not want Pinto back home, but we were wrong. He said that:

“My mother, Pinto’s grandmother, passed away three weeks ago. She had malaria and the treatment did not make any effect on her, so she died”. And in between tears he hugged Pinto and said “we are not only us, you and me. We did not expect you; we even buried your clothes thinking that you were dead. You are welcome my son, this is your home and this is your family”.

Pinto cried from sadness, he had a family, but the grandmother who raised him had now gone. We got to know that Pinto’s parents (mother and father) had died victims of HIV/AIDS when Pinto was two years old and the grandmother was the one who took

care of him. They lived together for many years and Pinto did not even get to know his parents.

We got to know the entire family, uncles, grand-uncles, some cousins and aunts. Our conversations there were all sad because of the situation. We had a day-long conversation and the day had gone; after a dinner with local food, we left Pinto at home and we went back to sleep at the hostel as Pinto's family house was small and had not enough space for all of us.

The way back home was as sad as could be; nobody commented on anything. There was nothing to say, just a feeling, a sad feeling. We all reported a feeling of emptiness; it was like we had lost our own grandmother, and we could not do anything about it. We were all sorry for Pinto, but we could not do anything for him.

The next morning we had a meeting again, to plan what to do and how to do it. The discussion was totally half-hearted, and we needed energy to think and make decisions to help Pinto. I asked the team members for their opinion about the situation we were facing.

We agreed that we could give him money to buy clothes and help with food supplies; however, the most important element here was not the quantity of goods we could offer, but the amount of love we could share, making sure he felt that he was a member of a larger family, and giving him the comfort and friendship we had been building up during this work. At this meeting we decided that we could help Pinto by giving him 7,000 Mt (about 200 euros), to pay his basic needs at the beginning of his life. We would give this money to his uncle, and we would kindly ask him to keep in contact. We also decided to stay for the entire weekend, and return on Tuesday depending on what would be the family reaction during these days.

We had fuel and money enough to pay our expenses, so that would not be a problem. We stayed on and visited Pinto and some of his cousins at the seaside, and some parts of the countryside. We played many games, including football, with other children in the neighbourhood. We were trying to make sure that after we had left, he would feel alright with the other children of the neighbourhood. And actually, he already had his former friends with him everyday we went to see him, which meant to us that he was really back home.

After three days, a day before going back to Maputo, we had a meeting with Pinto's family members to say goodbye. We took three different phone numbers to keep in contact and we offered money to the family. But when we gave the 7,000 Mt to Pinto's uncle, he received it and prayed and then he returned to us the same money saying that:

"I thank you for everything you have done for my family, for rebuilding the family and bringing back a lost family member. I am pleased to have my son back home and I am happy that in the world there are people like you. I have nothing to give you, because I am poor, I work in a local shop where I can get all the food and clothes he might need, and I also have some land from where I can get food for the family...I think you, more than us, need this money to help other children, so please take it back from our heart".

We did not expect that, but we could not force them to take the money, so we accepted and took it back. We explained to the family that we would really like to be able to come and make some more visits, but as the distance is too long we would not be able to do so, but with the telephone numbers we got we could keep in touch and share information about whatever comes. The next day we woke up very early, 3:30, to hit the road and get back home, for there were more than 1,000 km to drive. This is how Pinto got himself reintegrated with his family.

6.7. Local boards and community efforts

6.7.1. Stage VI: Follow-up processes: evaluation and celebration acts

6.7.1.1. Evaluation

In any SCA praxeologic approach, evaluation plays a fundamental role. However, the term 'evaluation' by itself can be perceived in many different ways. For example, Reeve & Peerbhoy (2007) argue that evaluation "is a contested term", as 'evaluators' use the term evaluation to describe an assessment, or investigation of a programme, whilst others simply understand evaluation as being synonymous with applied research. Not all evaluations serve the same purpose; some evaluations serve as a monitoring function rather than focusing solely on measurable programme outcomes or evaluation findings,

and it would be a tremendous feat to define the numerous types of evaluations that can be conducted (Reeve & Peerbhoy 2007).

In this study, the term evaluation means the process of monitoring the implementation of the plan previously designed. This means that the evaluation was a continuous and dialectic process of permanent reflection of all kind of actions that have taken place during the implementation of the programme.

For that purpose, during the implementation of all our activities we held meetings every week to discuss and coordinate the situation of our activity plan, the assessment of difficulties and problems we faced and to find possible solutions for these difficulties as well as to define the future tasks of the work. Here we also, together as a team, gave permanent feedback to the research team as a way to strengthen and update each member's responsibilities. Meetings and discussions play an important role in this process as an instrument of collective coordination and the redefinition of tasks and goals.

However, each time we reintegrated one of the street children, the number of people participating in planning and evaluation meetings was reducing at the same time, and after we had reintegrated all six members of the work team who, on their own disclosure, wanted to be reintegrated, we still had six other members who did not want to return to their families. As mentioned in previous sessions, this group was integrated into many other activities being held by the CCA staff in other contexts.

One of the major consequences of the reintegration processes was the creation of the local board of children's rights in Boane. We wished to be able to create similar boards in all places we had reintegrations, but in such a short time this was simply impossible, because this needed more time, more meetings, the establishment of more relationships and much more effort from the research team and the community members, but we are proud of having this board at least.

6.7.1.2. The local children's rights board in Boane and follow-up

In Boane two children have been reintegrated into their own families with success. The research team had a meeting with the traditional leaders of Boane, "Massaca" and "Fiche", to make sure that the local authorities were aware of the fact that there were

children who ran away from their homes due to several different problems that could be prevented if they had had time to discuss them during their meetings.

In order to establish contact with local leaders and traditional leaders in Boane, we asked the children's parents and relatives³⁷ whether it was alright for them to meet the local leaders and to talk about what had happened to their child in order to avoid other children doing the same or similar thing. When we asked this, all families were keen to help the process. On 5th September, the Saturday of the 14th fieldwork week, we visited the homes of the children reintegrated in Boane, where we were introduced to local leaders.

To our surprise, the local leaders had been informed about what had happened and why we wanted to meet them with the children's families, and when we got to their homes, we met an entire traditional community committee, that takes care of local social problems such as deaths, domestic conflicts, neighbourhood conflicts, robbery, traditional healers, and the administrative personnel had also been invited by the family. These committees used to meet each other every two or three months, or when necessary. Their power is based on historic relations, based on kinship that has centuries of existence, and all members of the community accept them as leaders; they play an important role in conflict management especially in land conflicts between newcomers and local residents as well as with government projects and local interests. It is important to mention here that nothing can be done without the consent of this committee.

In our first meeting with the traditional community committee we started by introducing ourselves as members of the CCA; we explained our project and activities, our goals, plans and expectations. We asked the families of the ex-street children to explain their feelings and hopes, and we also asked the boys to tell about their experiences.

This was a very long meeting, about five hours of talks, during which we asked local leaders to tell us what should be done to solve domestic conflicts, children's rights violations and to fight against poverty, which has been one of the major reasons why children run away from home. It was difficult for them to answer this question, and they

³⁷ Paito's grandfather and Alex's father

proposed that they should talk about those problems during their meetings with the community; they should give a chance for all members of the community to say what he or she thinks about children's rights and what can be done, using their own resources.

We did not have enough time to have a serious follow-up meeting of this local board, and we asked the CCA working team to make sure that there would be a follow-up and that they would provide the most important support. We had two meetings with community members and leaders, and from these meetings we realized that people in the local areas did not have any idea of what children's rights were, what the Convention on the Rights of the Child means, nor even know why these rights exist. We also came to understand that, at a community level, families have their own rules where they define what the rights of each member are.

The meaning of 'child', 'father', 'man' and 'woman' has a profound influence on this; these meanings are defined according to power relations established between each member of the community, and each member of the community does what s/he is expected to do. It is based on these power relations (De Barros & Tajú 1999), and framed by the cultural settings (Tvedten et al. 2008; De Barros & Tajú 1999; Osório 2000) of communities, so that we should try to understand and define what the rights of children are in that context.

However, I noticed that structural factors are among the factors that influence the street children phenomena. These factors include poverty, the low level of education among mothers, the high rates of orphanhood associated with HIV and AIDS (Tvedten et al. 2008) and the negligence or lack of sexual and reproductive rights of women, in this case of girls who get pregnant at an early age and who cannot fully take care of their children (Osório 2000).

6.7.2. Closing and celebrating the intervention

Celebration is not a common topic to be mentioned in most research reports. However, it plays an important role in all kinds of social relations and in demonstrating the intensity of social relations established during fieldwork practice.

In SCA, it is an important component of a practical intervention practice (Arnanz 1988), and it demonstrates the proceedings of long and challenging work, with time to

reflect on the implications and the feelings of each one with the finalization of the activities (Ander-Egg 1982 in Merino 1997).

To mark the conclusion of my fieldwork practice, the research team organized a simple celebration of our deeds, based on our financial capability, with the aim of strengthening the relationships we had established and of making sure that we as a community could continue working for the betterment of the entire team and of the CCA as an organization.

Before celebrating the end of the fieldwork, all of the six street children present who stayed on the streets and who had been working with the other CCA members in other activities, together with the ex-street children (coming from Boane, Boboole and Manhica), decided to destroy any compromising information that each one of us had, as agreed on at the beginning of the work. This was also done by staff members of the CCA who were members of the research team, and the social worker. We all deleted photographs from digital cameras, and destroyed any videos that anyone had got during the reintegration process; we removed names and specific locations from field notes, and we agreed that anything that would be compromising as a document should be burned immediately.

After this process, a celebration took place in which we served lunch with the participation and contribution of all street children and ex-street children with their families who had participated in the research; staff members of the CCA and local leaders (mainly coming from Boane) were also present.

Unfortunately it was not possible to have the participation of those who were living far away, such as those from Beira and Zavala, because we could not afford to pay their trip to Maputo.

6.8. Summary

This chapter aimed at describing the processes of interaction that gave birth to social change through the active participation of street children, by describing situations of data production determined by the establishment of relationships and the promotion of the active participation of street children.

In this chapter five stages are presented on the implementation of the fieldwork, the corresponding procedures of SCA praxeologic social work practice, as follows:

Stage 1 focused on understanding the social environment of the research field, where the city of Maputo and the CCA's work environment was presented. At this stage, the CCA organization is described as an organization where the decision-making process is based on a top/down process, where staff members do not have space for active discussion nor participation in the project design processes. This feature of practice is seen at this stage as negatively influencing the performance of the professionals dealing with the problem of street children, as they do not identify themselves with the activities taking place. It is also stated at this stage that, for the research to take place, a seminar was held to introduce the CCA staff members to the research project, its objectives and possible implications concerning practice and to create an environment for the active participation of local personnel.

Stage 2 of the research practice concerned the continuation of the previous stages, which aimed at establishing basic relationships and at identifying future team members for the research project. The methodological tools were based on document review together with direct observation and interaction while staff members were carrying out their everyday tasks. This was done in order to gain the acceptance of the staff members in relation to the research work and in relation to the researcher.

After being accepted by staff members and having selected the members of the working team, there came the third stage of the research practice, which aimed at identifying the street children's communities. The fundamental assumption at this stage was that the team members should be able to identify and select a small sample of street children in order to have valuable in-depth study material. This work took place during a three-week period of fieldwork practice, by visiting street children's zones (places where they lived and their communities), registering their location on a map, and producing basic information about their ages, number (and gender) and interests. The result of this stage was that there were 42 zones/groups with 445 street children living there, of which 46 were girls and 5 were babies under 2 years old. These groups were identified in five communities in the city of Maputo.

Stage 4 regarded the hermeneutic reading of street children's social reality, in order to find their real situation, the push and pull factors and their expectations. This stage

implied more responsibility as the results of such contacts could negatively or positively influence the final results of the activities that we would define. In terms of methods, this stage in general made use of dialogical intervention, where the combination of observation (participant and non-participant), interviews, informal/open interviews with individuals or groups, and general conversations were brought together to build an ethnographic immersion (Quintana 1992; Freire, 1994a; Freire 1994b; Freire 1988).

At this stage, data was produced through individual and group meetings with street children and the working team; this was repeated two or three times with each one, depending on the communication environment of the day we established the dialogue. The focus of the conversations and discussions was on the establishment of relationships between the street children and the working team, i.e., getting to know each other, each one's stories and backgrounds, reflecting on our problems as members of the same reality, with different stories and social lives, personal expectations, difficulties and challenges.

This was important as a reflection practice and for the promotion of participation practice, where each one would be able to identify the possible solutions to his/her problems; it was a stage of identifying realistic utopias. By establishing these conversations, dialogues, discussions and reflections, it was possible to promote true cooperation among all of us as members of a team which was able to focus its attention on the reality, in this case the street children's push and pull factors. This cooperation would also encourage team members to suggest possible solutions to the problems from their own perspective during the implementation of future activities.

Throughout this stage, factors such as domestic violence, extreme poverty, abandonment, the orphaned situation of children, and the breakdown of family ties were identified as the most common push factor of street life. During this stage, six of the street children expressed their intention to be reintegrated in their families of origin, and planning for this matter immediately started to take place, while the other six street children did not want to go back home at all, and for them actions were designed to make their hopes and dreams come true.

Stage 5 focused on the social reintegration processes of the six street children who expressed an interest in going back home, where home visits with street children took place with the objective of establishing preliminary contact and creating a space of

communication between the families of origin and the street children. The psychologist played a fundamental role in this; he had individual meetings with all street children members of the research team, where each one told about his fears and expectations. These were very important meetings to booster their strength and provide them with enough courage and moral feeling to fight and keep going. After six weeks of home visits and reintegration processes, all six children were reintegrated with success. All family members manifested an interest in having their children back home, and the reintegration environment was very positive.

After this long journey of reintegration, the follow-up process took place. However, it is important to mention that this stage took place during all stages of implementation of the fieldwork practice. There was not a specific evaluation time which was separate in any way from the whole process; it was a continuous process, where the research group had meetings every week to present and discuss the outcomes, difficulties and challenges involved in implementing the project, in order to strengthen and update each member's responsibilities.

One of the major consequences of the reintegration processes was the creation of the local board of children's rights in Boane. Unfortunately, due to financial and time factors it was not possible to have a thorough follow-up of the work carried out by this children's rights board, and it was not even possible to start similar practices in other reintegration areas.

Based on the findings of this fieldwork practice, the following chapter presents a review of these findings, attempting to demonstrate how street children's participation was performed and the kinds of social changes that have taken place in their lives from a practical point of view.

Chapter 7 : Participation and social changes in street children's lives

The rich man's dog gets more in the way of vaccination, medicine and medical care than do the workers upon whom the rich man's wealth is built. Samora Machel

7.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on presenting the fieldwork practice findings, the processes of social interactions between the street children, the CCA staff members and social worker (researcher) culminating in the reintegration of a group of street children into their family environment. All stages of the previous chapters reflect the practical facets of SCA participatory action research, where the main goal was to promote active participation among street children, and among CCA staff members who were part of the study. The data of this study are the immediate observable changes that emerged as a result of the active participation of street children in accordance with their social context.

In this chapter I intend to discuss those findings, reflecting on the meaning of participation in this study, the processes of participation that took place and the changes that have taken place during the implementation of the research project as a consequence of the active participation of street children.

The chapter is composed of three sections as follows: Section 1 discusses the street children's participation as a continuous process; Section 2 refers to street children's social changes through participation, and Section 3 presents a brief summary of this chapter.

7.2. Participation of street children as a process

The fieldwork practice focused on incorporating street children's active participation for their own social change within a SCA framework. The use of socio-cultural animation stems from a hermeneutic perspective, based on procedures of praxis, a process of permanent reflection on the social reality and construction, analysis and explanation of the social setting in which the research group is integrated. This process resulted in the street children developing a sense of consciousness about their lives.

Before going through the issue of the participation of street children in this research work, it is important to mention that the concept of participation is complex and very much contested in different contexts, i.e., what is meant by participation in Mozambique and in Africa may not be the same as what is seen as participation in Finland or in Europe.

In order to clarify my approach on the participation of street children, I will first recall the issue of childhood and adult-child relations vis-a-vis child participation in Mozambique and maybe in most African contexts. These relations are constructed and lived in different ways worldwide; however, in all contexts children seem to have less social power in relation to adults (De Barros & Tajú 1999), and the consequences of the unequal power sources are manifested in the marginalization of children in various contexts of social life, giving legitimacy to what is conventionally and naturally happening in almost all contexts, where children are muted and have no right to react or give a statement to whatever is said about them. They have been regarded as the property of their parents or guardians.

In Mozambique, and probably in most African countries, the situation is even worse, where adults, social and political structures, cultural and socio-economic factors are all frequently cited as the main barriers to child participation (Save the Children 2003; World Vision Asia and Pacific 2010; UNICEF 2009).

Children are not perceived as autonomous, and are normally considered to be deficient in their decision-making capabilities, hence, deserving of protection. Whereas adults believe that children have rights such as those to life, shelter, clothing, health and education, many do not believe that children have the right to participate in such community issues as decision-making.

This contradiction is crucial, and the discourse on child participation in Africa is further complicated by the fact that all forms of family relationships are stratified and the role expectations are clearly defined. Within families there are belief systems, customs and traditions that inform how relationships between parents and children are governed. Consequently, in most African communities, and if not in all, in the majority of Mozambican local communities, children are not allowed to speak among adults without permission. Doing so can bring disgrace to the parents of the child and is therefore punishable. Thus, in many cases children have no say in decision-making, even when the decision will affect them (Wusu & Isiugo 2006; Chingunta 2002).

In view of the participation rights contained in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, its realization and application may differ from those of adults, including parents, leading to the need for reconsideration of power relations between children and adults. Authentic and meaningful child participation requires a radical shift in traditional adult thinking and behaviour. This would involve putting the requisite structures in place that facilitate child participation in order to empower children in a world where they are relatively powerless in comparison to adults.

In facilitating child participation, adult interaction with children is suggested to be neither intimidating nor patronizing and should be based on the recognition of children as individuals, with rights and responsibilities of their own; playing an active role in the lives of their families, communities and societies; and having interests, views and priorities which may differ from those of the adults with whom they interact. This does not mean that adults no longer have responsibilities towards children, particularly for their protection, or that whatever children say must be complied with. Rather, it urges an attitude of respect for the capacity of children to contribute to decisions that affect them, whilst avoiding shifting excessive responsibilities, costs or workloads onto them under the guise of participation.

It was in this perspective that I considered street children's participation within the research practice, where they were accepted and seen as individuals, capable of informed decision-making in issues that have implications in their lives. These aspects are associated with what is partially presented in the CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child), which defines a range of provisions, protection, and participation rights for children, where there are clear and unclear clauses on the right of participation of

children, stated in Articles 12 and 13 (the right to express opinions, and to freedom of expression and information).

From the perspective of SCA, the street children's participation in the process was guided by intrinsic humanist principles such as:

- 1) the basic acceptance of the dignity of the person;
- 2) justice as the recognition of such dignity, above all differentiation by attributes (race, religion, ability, etc.);
- 3) interdependence responsible for possible coexistence in recognizing the rights of self and others;
- 4) the value of cooperation between people, which allows individual recognition and responsibility towards others;
- 5) freedom to think, express ideas, guide one's life, participate and act in one's personal life and as well as in his community's life;
- 6) the importance of singularity, in which each person is displayed as unique and different;
- 7) solidarity, understood as communicative action and free inter-communication based on principles of reciprocity among people;
- 8) the spiritual value of participating in the construction of a social community; and
- 9) democracy seen as a habit of everyday life that includes human dignity, respect, tolerance, free and pluralistic discussion of ideas, the area of coexistence for the development of life (Di Carlo et al. 1997).

By following these principles, the centrality of activities is to promote democratic participation through a hermeneutic-humanistic background. The promotion of democratic participation is at the heart of social transformation and the development of general well-being in children. The question is how can street children become 'change-makers', or 'transformators' of the social reality in which they live (street children communities and families/communities they come from), capable to act and address the issues that concern them?

As discussed in chapters III and IV, SCA praxeology is by itself a *cultural*, *pedagogical* and *social* asset for social development, and to be able to achieve more than merely encouraging functional participation, but also to provide a deep awareness of street children's lives, in order to challenge perceived injustices, one needs to confront the widespread fatalism about the fixity of politics and society (in a Maputo context). For this to happen, social workers, street educators and all agents addressing the issue of street children need to have a sense of themselves as change agents as well.

Discourses centring on concepts such as 'active participation' and 'empowerment' are widely used in social development programmes worldwide, but these concepts are easily confused with participation as duty without any political impact or contribution.

This kind of participation can become a way of offloading state responsibilities onto the family, individuals, voluntary organizations and the community as Dominelli (1999) notes.

Misunderstandings in this area are relatively common in the Mozambican context, where the idea of community care and family care are taken for granted by government organizations, overloading most grandparents as caregivers to their grandchildren whose parents have died, mostly as victims of HIV/AIDS, such as in the case of Mr. Matusse in Boane³⁸.

In this study, I argue that to have a more effective participation on the part of street children and then be able to promote effective social transformation, it may be necessary to move beyond the boundaries of the community of street children in which they live and even further away from the communities from where they came, influencing the social structure of the society in which they are integrated. By this I mean that it is necessary to look at the ecological structure of the child in general, if using Brofenbrenners' expressions, which are the micro, meso, macro, and chrono systems that influence and are influenced by the child.

This means that to address the issue of street children, their needs and traits and to promote their active participation, it is important to take into account the local (individual and societal context) in which they are located in association with the

³⁸ See Paito's reintegration process in Boane.

national, global and chronological (historical, political and economical) contexts in which the issue is addressed.

In this study, the promotion of participation is based on Freire's (1983) concept of problem-posing pedagogy, as a strategy to promote street children's social consciousness. At the heart of this problem-posing approach, questions such as the following arose: "why are we street children?", "isn't there any other alternative to being street children?", and if there is no alternative, "what can we do to solve our problems?" and "from where do we start to solve our problems?" These questions were of crucial importance to make street children and the group in general reflect on their social setting with the final aim of street children taking action as fully human actors.

To become more fully human involves discursive debates over meanings and definitions, and through permanent questioning of their social reality, street children started to develop a 'critical consciousness', which means that they had *awareness* (knowing that it was not their fault for becoming street children and they can change the history of their lives if they work together), going through a process of *de-socialization* (challenging the general stereotypes of the society in general) and becoming more *self-organized* (by taking part in a social change project such as the fieldwork project we were implementing).

In this context, street children participation implied active involvement (as suggested by Smith (2002)), and commitment. Involvement implies many aspects such as trustful communications between adults and children, openness and opportunities to express opinions freely, independence and reciprocity and the possibility of making informed decisions based on their competences (Tomanovic 2003).

During the fieldwork research, all activities were based on a set of interactions of practice and reflection, questioning meanings of the social reality and situations between all research team members' social life, families' feelings and fears, pains and dreams, hopes and strengths. In addition, the research practice gave space for the social bond aspect, by structuring for the street children's families and relatives a feeling of security and awareness of their social conditions, their limitations and possibilities to resolve their difficulties.

It required deep philosophical and ethical foundations of morality, respecting people's feelings, beliefs, stories, objectives and interests, and also proposing solutions in different dimensions from the entire working group's perspectives.

From the analytical point of view, the children's participation during the implementation of the fieldwork project can be summarized into three different stages as follows: a) *total apathy and absence of participation*; b) *limited acceptance and participation* c) *active participation*.

a) Total apathy and absence of participation

By the term apathy in this study I mean the tendency of street children to avoid contact and totally reject contact with strangers. This does not mean the same when the term is used in a medical and psychological approach, which refers to physical or psychological malfunctions³⁹.

This level of participation is characterized by a total absence of participation: street children are not at all interested in taking part in any activity or even to establish any kind of contact with the working team. This represents the stage of critical analysis of social reality, where the research team was interested in understanding the social setting of the context in which we were working and also in establishing preliminary contact with street children.

Even though the staff of the CCA had previous contact with this same group of street children, the context (in terms of objectives, activities, methodologies, number of people in the team, etc.) of their interaction with these street children was different from the previous contacts they had established. Because of these changes, the interaction with street children had a different setting. To get to know each other was crucial and to understand each person's problems was vital. However, the establishment of contact with street children followed specific procedures; for example, the team first had to introduce each other, sharing the objectives of the work being undertaken, the research project procedures and possible implications for participant's lives and asking '*politely*' for their participation if they become interested.

³⁹ <http://endoflifecare.tripod.com/juvenilehuntingtonsdisease/id236.html>

The reaction was not as simple as one can expect. Rejection was the main feature at this stage, and in many cases no response was given to questions and requests to participate in one or more tasks. The following excerpts taken from my notes during conversations shows some of the interactions that took place during this stage:

Excerpts from the second meeting on 3rd August 2009, from 2 to 4 p.m.⁴⁰.

Social Worker (Sw): *Good afternoon. How are you all? Maria, how is everything?*

Manuel (reacting to the greeting): *“Why do you start by greeting my wife...you should greet men first, then you can say hello to her...do not do it again...last time I told you that she was my wife”.*

Sw: *“Well, forgive me...how are you by the way? What about you Paito...Pinto...”* (here it was important to remember names of at least 4 or 6 members, this allows for more confidence).

Nurse (N): *“Hey guys, we are coming to visit you, to see if you are alright and also to continue our conversation...remember that we discussed last Monday about the possibility of participating in this research we have, and that we said that we would all benefit from it. So what do you have to say?”*

Paito (a bit lazily): *“I have no time for that...I am tired and I think I am happy to stay here on my own...so I am not interested”.*

Maria (in a funny way): *“Are you going to pay me for participating in your research work? How much will you give me? If you won’t pay just leave me alone...because most people come here to exploit us. So what you say?”*

Pedro (at the same time): *“What kind of things am I supposed to do?”*

Street educator (Se): *“You guys, you have the problem of speaking all at the same time. First I can say that this research has no money for anybody. We are not giving you a job...what we are trying to do is what we have been doing always, to help you guys, but this time is different, we want you to*

⁴⁰ Most of the following excerpts were registered after the meeting with the street children, and the conversations during these meetings needed to be fully reconstructed. In many cases, most of the utterances may have changed afterwards, but the same ideas were maintained. At this stage, no cameras, video or voice recorders were used, due to the ethical concerns already mentioned.

decide what to do to help yourself, so simple. But you only think about money and we told you already that there is no money at all”.

Titos (a bit angrily): *“Why don’t you just go away...we are tired of phony people coming here and telling us stories like those you are telling us and after they get information from us, they go away...they just forget us and then they put our pictures in the newspaper...they make money out of us and they don’t even share it with us”.*

Manuel: *“You guys seem that you are not getting our idea...we are tired of you all, just go away and let us alone. So many of you come to tell us lies here...you are all the same, saying bad things about us in the news paper.”*

Psychologist (P) (speaking in slang): *“Why you are thinking that about us? Haven’t we been in contact with you ever since? Haven’t we provided help when you are ill? Have we ever made you feel bad about us? You know us and should just think about it a bit more carefully; you know that we are not the same as the others”.*

Similar conversations and discussions took place in different situations and contexts, sometimes tending towards violence. But after making all aspects clear to the group we settled down and started to have simple and frank conversations and lots of jokes in between. It is through an attitude of acceptance, respect, recognition, love and trust that dialogical communication takes places, creating, as a consequence, an environment of critical awareness.

b) Limited acceptance and limited participation

At this point the street children started to accept this contact with the research members and to ask some questions about the processes that we had been mentioning throughout the establishment of interaction. Questions such as *“why, how, where and with whom”* were commonly asked by street children. At this stage, the level of trustful relations started to take place; the street children started to identify themselves with the research objectives and became more interested in giving their contributions.

It is important to mention here that the shift from total rejection to limited acceptance did not happen at once; it was a long process, probably taking about two or

three weeks for all group members to show similar levels of acceptance. However, two or three weeks of time frame to shift from total rejection to limited acceptance is still short if considering the need to build an authentic and trusting relationship. So the quick change might have been influenced by many other factors, such as previous contacts and relationships established by CCA staff members with street children, the work that has been being done by CCA and the skills and experience of the working team in interacting with street children.

In normal conditions, I believe that these changes would have taken much longer time than they did and probably, the research team would have ended up without getting a true and real picture of the street children's social reality. So the background of CCA as an institution and of the staff members has had a great impact on the research process as a whole.

We as a team also started to share responsibilities, such as letting the street children reflect on what should be done, what their priorities were, how we could achieve those aspects they had been thinking of, and so on.

However, at this stage, most of the information the street children provided was not absolutely true; many times they lied to hide their identities until they made sure that they were stepping on safe ground; this was associated with the fact that street children wanted to profit from each step they took in our relationship.

c) **Active participation**

As manifested by their more open-minded behaviour, the street children had established a trustful relation with the entire working team. Along with the implementation of activities, they had a clear understanding of the objectives, financial conditions and challenges of the work that we were performing. There was a high level of confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness of what each one ought to do and how to do it.

Children also had opportunities to coordinate meetings and report issues that might have been considered important during other activities that were not related to a specific task of the research work. The following excerpt taken from my field notes presents an example of this stage:

Excerpts from the sixth meeting on 13th August 2009, from 3 to 6 p.m.

Social Worker (Sw): *Good afternoon to everybody, how are you doing? (...) I will ask one of you to chair the meeting, any of you.*

Manuel: *Since I am the boss here, I think I will handle the meeting today, so you have to follow my orientation.*

Street educator (Se): *Well, I think we are all bosses here and we have the right to stay or go away if we want to.*

Manuel: *What I am supposed to ask?*

Psychologist (P): *Let us start from the last meeting point, which Mr. Marrengula asked us to think about.*

Manuel (speaking in slang): *I forgot the topic guys.*

Joaquim: *We were talking about what solution each one has in mind to go home or to stay here. What each one is thinking to do to make it happen, right?*

Titos: *So let's start to talk.*

Manuel: *Who wants to give his opinion first?*

(...)

It is important here to mention that these changes of participation levels did not happen at once and are not separate from each other. They are stages of interaction that are in permanent interconnection; not all children started to be open-minded and have the same feeling at the same time. It occurred during a continuous process through a permanent insistence and explanations about who we were, why we were there and what were our interests, by making questions and giving them an open voice and the freedom to express themselves. Gradually they started to become members of a larger group, based on permanent interaction, continuously building empathy and a trustable relationship.

One can question 'how you demonstrate respect for street children and how this respect and trust can be observable within a research process?' Many questions similar to this may arise when reading this report; however, there are aspects of culture that are

not describable, and they are integrated through and within social settings and behaviour. The above-quoted excerpts demonstrate a high level of change in terms of trust, confidence, empathy, self-confidence and openness.

“I think we should work and stop complaining. There is no money but we can do something, there are many shops around the city and we can go there and ask for help”. (Manuel reacting to team members’ position of losing hope when we noticed that we had not enough money to achieve all the needs of the group, 29/08/2009)

These reactions show in brief how the feeling of participation began to change in Titos and Manuel, from rejection to complete acceptance, from apathy to empathy, from hate to respect. These elements are fundamental in building a participatory action research.

While this can be considered a selective representation on the processes and perspectives of participation, there was a sense of respect for other elements of participation. The participation of children in this approach was based on the group’s interest in constructing a sense of belonging, equality, and active participation on an egalitarian basis, promoting interdependence between children and adults as members of the same team, working for the same goals.

According to Penn (1999), children must be treated as fundamentally autonomously as possible, even if they may rely on adults to make such autonomy possible. Respect for children as competent learners and respect for children’s rights to participate are important criteria by which the quality of early childhood programmes can be judged (Sheridan & Samuelsson 2001).

The three areas of functional animation, namely activism, art, and "mediation" (Gillet 2001) were important elements for the leader of the research group in order to provide better guidance for a comprehensive intervention and promote a democratic social work practice with street children.

Animation as a praxis is demonstrated throughout the study as a set of interaction between practice and reflection, questioning the meaning of the social reality and the inter-connection between street children’s social life, the families’ feelings and fears, dreams, hopes and strengths.

This was an adventure where, besides the technical aspect (methodological settings) and professional (presence of animator), the economic aspect (financial settings and gathering of support), the order of rationality (thinking, planning, discussing, reflecting and proposing ideas together), in addition to the ideological aspect, the research approach was filled by what Gillet (2001) calls “the militancy of the animation, the order of Utopia, carrier of the social imaginary”.

7.3. Social changes through participation

The term ‘social change’ is defined sociologically as alterations in the basic structures of a social group or society. One of the most popular definitions of social change is supplied by Harper (1993), where he considers it as the “significant alterations of social structure and cultural patterns through time” within “a persistent network of social relationships” in which interaction between people has become intense. The consequences of such changes may have effects in all aspects of the population affected by it, from economic perspective to shifting cultural norms and values as well as the local settings of social organizations.

In this study, the meaning of social change is taken from the Freirian concept of social transformation, where individuals are seen as active members of social transformation through dialogue which requires faith in humanity. As Freire (1988, 71) states, “*faith is an a priori requirement for dialogue. Founding itself upon love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between dialoguers is the logical consequence*” and through that they become able to “focus their attention on the reality which mediates them (the problem challenging them) and the response to that challenge is the action of dialogical subjects upon reality in order to transform it”.

The findings in this study display intensive changes in street children’s social lives, starting from the structure of the group, where they have learnt to be more communicative and integrated in a new group, a research group. They have also started to develop communicative skills by having an opportunity to participate on the route taken by their own social lives as, in previous contexts, their lives were shaped by the

overwhelming feeling of rejection by the society they lived in. All these changes are consequences of a dialogue and reconstruction of social reality.

The participation of street children in the research process was the main goal during the implementation of the fieldwork research practice, and it is by itself a social change as they have now become active subjects of their lives.

The results of the fieldwork show the principal changes in the street children's lives, starting from their initial contact. The processes of participative evaluation demonstrate the continuous changes in the commitment of the street children's personal feelings, in their expressions of a higher level of self-confidence, their development of leadership skills in contributing to decision-making processes, all of which are associated with the increase in the level of their awareness about their social situation, and interest in changing their lives. The following excerpt is an example of the profound changes that have occurred in the life of one of the street girls who took part in the study:

“Maria is now working with a group of activists counselling street girls living with HIV/AIDS here at our organization. She has become an important group leader among those girls and most of them follow her counselling very actively. We have started new activity plans with those girls here and Maria has been playing an important role” (excerpt from a CCA report given in a phone call follow-up situation, received on 12/03/2010).

During the research process I focused on short-term changes, namely those which were possible to observe directly, such as the street children's active participation, their capacity in building empathy and producing responses to their problems, their leadership capacities and the contribution to their reintegration process. It is through these changes that the transformation of social reality can take place.

In general, in order to analyze the information regarding changes in street children's lives, I defined two (2) main categories of changes that can be found from the data, which are: a) *changes in relation to the research process* and b) *changes in terms of self-consciousness and confidence within their social situation*.

a) Changes in relation to the research process

The changes in relation to the research project are intrinsically connected to the levels of participation distributed into four sub-levels: total rejection, partial rejection, acceptance, and belonging to the group.

Total rejection is the initial moment of contact, where street children rejected the research group, not wanting to establish any kind of contact with the research group. Intensive work was necessary in order to explain our goal and interests, making sure that, children became acquainted with the issue in case.

Partial rejection and limited acceptance are related to the second stage of children's participation where there is a spark of curiosity, where children start to question our motivations, our interests, and the implications of their participation. However, at this level they do not totally open up to the team. They tell very little about themselves and in many cases lie about themselves. There were very important elements in gaining this limited acceptance; these included active contact during which each was repeatedly called by his/her name, respect for their privacy, help in certain activities and acceptance of their situation. .

The extent to which the street children felt that they belonged to the group was related to the stage of full participation, where children identified themselves with the objectives of the project, participating actively in each activity designed and proposed by the entire group. Children also felt comforted and respected as members of a group which was composed of some adults, in whom they could trust and share their worries and interests. These feelings of friendship and belonging, respect and peace, comfort and trust, security and empathy are some of the most precious and important elements in this process that can be built through SCA participatory action research, as the following excerpt shows.

“I have never had a friend since I’ve been here on streets, people just treat us as dust, as trash...even the police come here and take away our things. But with you guys I feel ok...I feel respected and protected. I feel that there are people who really care about us here”. (Titos, after 2 weeks of permanent contact with the working team on 26/08/2009)

b) **Changes in terms of self-consciousness and confidence within their social situation.**

Issues of self-consciousness in children are not of common concern among researchers and research practices. There are many psychological and behavioural studies on self-consciousness in adults but very little research has been done on this topic with children and youth.

According to Fenigstein et al. (1975), self-consciousness is the tendency of people to direct attention inward, and it can be private or public. Private self-consciousness is an awareness of one's inner thoughts and feelings and is associated with awareness of internal sensations, attitude of consistency, and higher correlations between self-report and self-behaviour (Scheier et al. 1979; Scheier 1980; Scheier et al. 1978.). Public self-consciousness, on the other hand, is the general awareness of the self as a social object and is associated with conformity, low self-esteem, low risk taking, and a tendency to express attitudes in public annoyingly (Tunnell 1984; Scheier 1980.).

Freire (1983; 1994a) starts this discussion from the concept of conscientization, where awareness and self-awareness is in opposition to his banking concept of education. In this concept, education is expected to be a process of breaking through prevailing mythologies (the oppressor produces concepts and scenarios of social life to maintain the oppressed in permanent ignorance of social reality) to reach levels of awareness of oppression, and of being an object in a world where only subjects have power. For him, the process of conscientization (which includes the idea of awareness and self-awareness) involves identifying contradictions in experience through dialogue and becoming a *subject* with other oppressed subjects, which means becoming a part of the process of changing the world. This means that individuals become active actors in the social transformation of their social reality.

Findings from the study reveal that street children have more public self-consciousness, manifested by their tendency to reject contact with the outer world; they do not easily establish trusting relations with people. This is related to the fact that they are first seen as dangerous siblings in society, little devils, and children with a bad background. These children are labelled as being *marginal characters, bandits, devils, demons, drug users, robbers, beggars, etc.*, all of which are extremely strong expressions.

If society in general sees street children based on these stereotypes, and tends to treat them as such, street children react with even more public self-consciousness, assuming the negative attention provided by society, developing a closure between them, building a social system for their protection and avoiding direct contact with the other side of society, and because they are stereotyped and rejected by the society, they develop low self-esteem within their environment.

This is what Freire (1983; 1994a) says when he argues that man's ontological vocation is to be a subject acting upon his world in order to transform it, and in so doing, he moves towards new opportunities for a fuller and richer life, individually and collectively. In this perspective, each human being, no matter how submerged in the culture of silence he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others. This is the reality of street children, who had a clear conscience of their environment and understood it critically. The only issue missing was the essence of love, care and hope.

The ethical concerns of SCA had a very strong influence in developing and boosting self-consciousness among street children. This was only possible based on issues such as care, openness, love, respect for differences, acceptance of differences, absence of stereotypes and preconceptions, and equality (Freire 1983.).

It is based on these principles that the highest aspiration of SCA is met in this study, by ensuring that street children themselves are capable of pursuing their social and cultural development by transforming their social reality, thereby improving the quality of their life throughout active participation (Gillet 2001; 2006.).

The following excerpts from my field notes demonstrate two moments of low and high self-consciousness. For example, Paito, when he was asked why he came to live on the street during the first days of our contact, his answer was “*I don’t know*”; a similar reaction came from Titos, who said:

“Well, I forget and I don’t want to talk about that”.

After 3 weeks of contact, the same question was put to them, and their answers were as follows:

“I was tired sleeping without food at my grandfather’s home. I thought that coming to the city I would get a job and be able to help my grandfather with

the expenses at home. I was wrong; since I came here the only thing I do is clean cars, shine shoes and sleep on the streets.” (Paito, statement made during a conversation on 10/08/2009)

“You know what, you are so cool and I thank you for caring about us. When I left home, I was tired suffering, it doesn’t make sense to go back there, because the same people are there, they will continue beating me, they will continue treating me as a slave. My father died long ago and my mother as well, my uncles just use us as slaves, taking care of their farms and things like that. I think it is better we forget this issue and if you want to really help me, just help me get a place to work and learn something that will be useful for me, like school, for example. But forget about my home and my family (...)” (Titos’ reaction during a conversation in August 2009)

Being able to communicate about their past, their interests, dreams and hopes, and the increasing capacity of providing ideas and contributing to the implementation of several activities were considered signs of their increasing self-consciousness. The children were assuming positive images of themselves, and they felt that they were not trash as society used to treat them. However, it is impossible to provide any measurement of these feelings, as they are very subjective elements of personality.

The increase in street children’s self-confidence is accompanied by a corresponding increase in their self-consciousness. Because self-confidence is more about one’s positive behaviour about one’s self, it has much to do with how you see the world around yourself. As Yee & Flanagan (1985) and Higa (2008) define it, self-confidence is the heightened awareness of the self. It is related to the internal thoughts and feelings one can have.

Self-confidence is also related to how the child is seen and treated in relation to the system in which s/he is integrated, recalling Brofenbrenner’s (1990) ecological theory of how family relationships at the micro level - the family networks (church, school, friends and neighbours, amongst others) - interact with each other. This refers to the participation of the community, the definition of societal policies and their implementation, where there is a need to take into account the existing formal child welfare institutions as well as non-formal institutions which have been responsible for issues of child protection and welfare at the meso and macro levels.

The global influence also plays an important role in this, when international organizations of child protection and child welfare define and implement policies that have a direct or indirect impact on local institution's performance. Associated to this, are the economical, political and social changes taking place worldwide, which have a direct implication on local institutions' performance.

People who have high self-confidence tend to be full of hope about the future; they build positive and realistic utopias and are able to design and build prospects of life with more energy while at the same time they assess their capabilities, and evaluate and control the risks to be taken into consideration while planning their prospects. Hope, faith, love, respect, and care are some of the most important elements of SCA, based on reflexive thinking and praxis, building a relationship of trust and respect between individuals (Freire 1988).

Findings from this study demonstrate that the use of an SCA approach, its philosophy and ethical concerns, provides space for democratic participation, where, in the case of street children, it was possible to make them competent to observe their social settings and to promote their active engagement with other team members. This gave them an opportunity to obtain new insights about their social situation and to develop autonomy in decision-making about their own future.

The following excerpts, taken from my field notebook demonstrate these elements:

"For me the most important thing is to have a chance to meet my father and ask him for his forgiveness, no matter what he decides. I am just sorry that I did bad things to my sister, but I am not afraid anymore. I just need a chance to say this to him and if he thinks he will kill me, it is just ok...so if you can help me doing this...then I am ok." (Kito 24 August 2009)

"Well, for me I would like to go to my village, the only problem is that it is so far and I have no money for it, and it has been a long time since I've been there. I am tired of this life...but I have no choice, do you understand? It is really stressing to stay here and I don't even know how my grandfather is doing...I miss him so much;" (Pinto, 24th August 2009)

"I wish I could be at home with my grandparents, I just feel sorry for what I did and I just don't know how to go there and ask for forgiveness...so if you

guys can help me on this, that would be great...just help me meet my grandparents and ask forgiveness for me for all that I did in the past”
(Sebastião 24 August 2009)

“For me the priority is to get a job and then I will be able to rent a room and then plan something better for the future, now it is just impossible to do anything. I need to get something to do, if you could help us get something that will provide us with financial capacity and independence, that would be great” (Manuel, 24 August 2009)

These excerpts, taken during the conversations, demonstrate that children were able to take informed decisions, plan a future path and evaluate the risks involved in their decisions. As Freire would argue, they were provided with the proper tools for the encounter with reality (to be able to face it); gradually they could perceive their personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, becoming conscious of it and being able to deal critically with it (Freire 1998). This is what I mean by changes in self-confidence and in self-consciousness.

7.4. Future prospects of changes

During the implementation of the fieldwork research, I was very much interested in understanding how social change as discussed in previous sections continues taking place throughout history.

Regarding this issue, it is important to remember the concept of utopia, from Paulo Freire (1994a), which means that people define possible realistic paths about the future, i.e., all plans and objectives that can take place during their life-long path.

By future prospects of change, I mean that the street children’s lives did not end with the end of the research project; they have been integrated into a social setting that will provide them other paths of life and possibly create other types and forms of change in the future, and hope and faith are always present when thinking of a better future.

However, these important elements are not seen in the data as changes, as they are my own personal speculations about what will possibly happen after a period of time at

the CCA institutional setting and in children's families and communities which have been a part of this research work. After the implementation of the fieldwork, I was deeply concerned about what would be the future of the local board of children's rights? Are the children continuing their plans and dreams? Is the CCA continuing to assist those children and their families? How will the CCA staff members who have taken part in the research process continue sharing this knowledge in the future?

Regarding these prospects, I recall Gillet (2006) when he says that animation is a factor of transformation and social progress and that animation directs everyday life, impregnating the dynamic and directing its energies towards the personal and collective. It has the capacity for the individual, on the one hand, to discuss his own experiences compared with those of others, which allows him (the social actor) to understand his history and (future) destination in a collective, putting it in relation to everything that affects it, and, on the other hand, to recreate solidarity, consent, while rejecting loneliness and difference.

Based on this statement I would argue that the experiences of participating in the research project will constitute elements of a life-long heritage and will be there as long as the members of the research project live. The self-consciousness and confidence that has been built among street children will probably boost their capability of getting reintegrated into new settings of social life, with its many challenges.

It is indeed also possible to consider these points as weak aspects of my research process, since a study cannot survive on speculation and non-confirmable information, because in reality I cannot predict what will happen to the children who have been reintegrated into their families or what changes will take place in their communities. Nor can I forecast how the CCA will react to the staff member's knowledge and new awareness after the termination of the research process.

7.5. Summary

The objective of this chapter was to discuss the findings of the fieldwork research practice, answering the questions: how did the street children participation take place and what changes have taken place during the implementation of the research project?

Three levels of participation were identified during the fieldwork research and they are: *total apathy and absence of participation; limited acceptance and participation; and active participation*. These levels are analytical tools to describe processes of participation and they must be seen as interconnected levels or stages of participation through the research process.

Regarding the question of social change in the street children's lives during the research process, it must be stated that, in this study, participation itself is a change. From an analytical point of view, two categories of change were identified through the research practice and they are: changes in relation to the research process, which include how children identified themselves with the research practice, research objectives and how well they were informed about the activities of the research project; changes in terms of self-consciousness and confidence within their social situation, which is related to how street children felt as human beings in a certain social setting, and how they perceived their goals and interests during the research project.

The Freirian principles of hope, faith, love, respect, and care are the most valuable elements in promoting these kinds of changes in individual's lives from a SCA perspective. These principles are based on reflexive thinking and praxis, where relationships of trust and respect between individuals give birth to dialogical communication (Freire 1988). It is through dialogue that individuals develop a critical awareness of their social reality, by becoming active subjects of their lives, and thus they (individuals) struggle for social transformation, with the main objective of overcoming the oppressive system that regulates their lives.

The use of the SCA approach, its philosophy and ethical concerns, provide space for democratic participation, where, in the case of street children, it was possible to make them competent to observe their social settings, and to promote their active engagement with other team members. This gave them the opportunity to obtain new

insights about their social situation and to develop autonomy in making decisions about their own future.

Street children participation in the research project will have future implications in their lives, where their experiences will constitute elements of a life-long heritage and will be there as long as they live. The self-consciousness and confidence that has been built among street children will probably boost their capability of getting reintegrated into new settings of social life and of facing the challenges involved.

Chapter 8 : Push and pull factors in relation to local understandings of children's rights

*To tell the truth is
revolutionary.*

Antonio Gramsci

8.1. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on a discussion of the research results based on the central questions of the fieldwork research project.

The push and pull factors concerned with the street children phenomena was not the central topic of this study, but since this topic came up in different ways and forms as an important element in street children's participation during the fieldwork practice, I decided to write a separate chapter about it. This is associated with the fact that most elements discussed during the fieldwork practice are directly or indirectly related to children's rights, and to the push and pull factors of the street children phenomena.

Based on the above statements, this chapter's objective is to discuss the pull and push factors of the street children phenomena in relation to the local understanding of children's rights and child welfare issues in a Mozambican context and more specifically in the city of Maputo. However, I do not assume that all reflections hereby presented represent the understanding of all people living in Maputo, because Maputo is a multicultural and multiethnic city characterized by profound class differentiation and stratification.

This chapter is divided into three sections as follows: Section 1 presents the discussion on the push and pull factors of the street children phenomena; Section 2 discusses issues of children's rights at a local level, and finally Section 3 makes a short summary of the chapter.

8.2. The push and pull factors of street children

Push factors are by definition the main elements that influence a child to abandon the family environment to live on the streets. These factors are external to the child's will

and are related to the family, community and societal relationship with which s/he has been in contact.

Findings from the critical analysis of the street children's world, demonstrate that the street children phenomena is in some way directly influenced by the poverty of the majority of families and communities from where street children come. This is based on the understanding of the physical and social environment of street children's community, their everyday relationships and dominant community values through the establishment of open dialogue and channels of communication (Quintana 1992), although not to be regarded as conclusive,

"I left home because of too much hunger at home; my grandfather is not able to feed all of us anymore. I decided to come here and see what I could do to help him, I thought I would get some work and be able to give my contribution to the family, but I was wrong" (says Paito, during a conversation 12/08/2009).

The situation of poverty, besides other factors, is also seen as a push factor by many other researchers in the same field. For instance, some authors mention that the main factors to explain the origins of street life involvement in African countries are the state of the economy, poverty, lack of educational opportunities, rural to urban migration, family abuse and social changes, the latter which are mainly linked to the weakening of family structures (Veale & Doná 2003; Young 2002; Matchinda 1998; Kombarakaran 2003), displacement and HIV/AIDS (Suda 1997 in Veale & Doná 2003).

In a Mozambican context as well as in many developing countries, poverty is a structural problem interconnected with many other important aspects which must be taken into account, such as the high rates of mortality due to HIV/AIDS and malaria, global warming effects (droughts, cyclones), natural disasters (earthquakes, cyclones, etc.) and the high rates of migration of the male population to South Africa (seeking better work opportunities) (Tvedten, Paulo & Rosário 2006; 2007; 2009). These factors have, in practice, significantly broken extended paternal support networks and the normal social structure of the family at the community level. This has resulted in the creation of large numbers of economically very vulnerable families headed by elderly females, with the majority of family members composed by children.

“My mother and father died a long time ago, they were ill and I don’t know what they had. I live with my grandparents. There are a total of 14 of us at home”. (Paito’s statement when asked about his parents during a conversation 12/07/2009)

Another good example of this is given by Jaimito, whose father has been working in South Africa and he has been taken care of by his uncle, the younger brother of his father. His mother died years before his father left for South Africa:

“My father is in South Africa, he has been working there for a long time. He sends money to my uncle to give me, but I never see this money” (Jaimito’s statement during a conversation 16/08/2009)

The findings of the study show that the profile of Mozambican street children is that they are predominantly adolescent boys, almost all of whom have experienced the loss of at least one parent due to unconfirmed diseases. A significant feature of the Mozambican street child profile is the finding that approximately half of the street children are 13 years of age (refer to Table 3 in Chapter VI) or older, and of these the majority are male.

The profile of Mozambican street children reflects the socio-economic structural changes that Mozambique has witnessed during the last fifteen years (Castel-Branco 1995; Abrahamson & Nilson 1994; Hanlon 1997). Before 1986 Mozambique was characterized by a tight administrative structure and by the sedentary nature of a mainly agricultural population. People had a strong community attachment and there were strong ties of community solidarity. Family networks had a strong role in maintaining the social welfare of children and the elderly. Today’s situation, with the introduction of the market-based economy and social relations (associated with lack of employment), global warming (increasingly low production levels every year from an agriculture point of view), and the growing situation of social stratification, the tendency of place (inter-regional) mobility, the search for better opportunities of life and domestic violence seems to increase (Hanlon 1997), and the situation of children, the elderly, youth and women’s rights seems to be worsening day after day.

Sexual abuse has been one of the forms of family abuse that most children living on the street have considered to be the push factor, especially for girls.

“I had a boyfriend, but my uncle did not like him. I am 16 years old you see, and I was 14 years old then. My uncle wanted me to have sex with him and I did not accept it. I had to run away from there, because he tried many times to rape me. He has daughters older than me, why doesn’t he just ask his daughters? That is why I am living here for about 2 years now. I think here is much better, I am with my boyfriend and we can strive together to live, even though we are poor”. (Maria, during a conversation, 06/07/2009)

Another important finding on push factors is related to the fact that most children’s rights’ violations are not seen by community members and families as violation, but as an accepted practice for their social and moral development in an educational process to form the future men and women of their communities. This issue is discussed in detail in the section on issues of children’s rights.

However, there are the pull factors, which are the elements that attract children to street life. In this case, children are not forced to leave home and stay on the streets, but they feel attracted by the street life. These factors are not separated from the push factors, and they should be seen as interconnected.

The data also identified some pull factors that bring children to the street, such as the desire for independence and freedom, economic security, excitement and enchantment of living in cities, and the hope of achieving a higher social position in their living standards (Plummer et al. 2007; Lalor 1999). These assumptions are confirmed by the following excerpts:

“I came here looking for a good job, something that would give me money, money to buy whatever I wanted and so I wouldn’t depend on my uncle any more” (during a conversation with Titos 22/10/2009).

“I was tired of the pressure from my grandparents; I wanted my freedom so that I could be with my friend here. They said no to me and I went away” (during a conversation with José, 10/07/2009).

However, it is important to keep in mind the need for a more socially and culturally informed approach to understanding the street children’s motivation to move onto the streets, moving away from large scale assessments of demographic change and focusing more on local contexts (Lawson 2000 in Kombarakaran 2003), focusing on the

inclusion of children's agency into migration research in light of the most recent debates on child welfare of 'children as social actors' (Kombarakaran 2003).

8.3. Children's rights and local understandings

During the implementation of the research project, elements of how children's rights are perceived locally came across, especially from the community point of view. This study had, since the very beginning, the assumption that the phenomenon of children abandoning their families to live on the streets might be deeply associated with children's rights violation, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, that these violations are directly related to economic factors.

It is indeed easy to explain that parents with a low income will definitely be unable to satisfy the most basic needs of their children, and consequently those children will seek for alternative solutions to their situation. This position is acceptable on the one hand, since most of the street children who were members of the research group came from poor families.

A more polished understanding of the results obtained during the fieldwork discloses that it is not a mechanical reaction for a child from a poor income family to move away from the family simply because his needs are not met. The findings show that the possibility of a child abandoning the family will be more likely conditioned by how his or her rights are observed from the parenting-style perspective than simply by the fact that the family is poor and cannot satisfy his aspirations.

Enlightening the poverty situation in Mozambique may be of use at this stage. National research on poverty indicators show that about 54.2 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, which is approximately less than 1USD per day (Hanlon 1997; Tvedten, et al. 2009). If the main push factor is poverty, we could then assume that about 54 percent of children in Mozambique are living on the streets, which is not true. Therefore, in my understanding, other factors, such as maltreatment, family relationships, parenting relations, and domestic violence, constitute more decisive and determining push factors for the child's decision to move onto the street.

Findings from the study confirm this position when children reported that they had run away from home because they were afraid of one of their relatives who used to beat them or punish them heavily (see also Marrengula 2007).

“I left home because my stepmother beats me and she does not give me food, she makes me work hard and even harder than her own children” (Alex’s statement during open conversation 07/07/2009)

“I am afraid of my father, I took his money and thought I would bring it back but I couldn’t. If he had found me at that time he would have killed me. He is very violent. I remember the time he used to beat my mother...it was very hard for us to keep watching. My father can kill me if he finds me” (Kito’s report on his father’s violent behaviour during conversation 25/07/2009)

These and many other justifications that can be found in several contexts and realities are related to how children’s rights are perceived in different contexts, influencing how each community defines child protection and child welfare. This fact is also associated with the local government’s efforts in promoting, implementing and clarifying children’s rights’ policies at the community level. In the Mozambican context, the concept of children’s rights and child welfare is not a commonly known concept, and there are deep cultural differences on how each community perceives the concept of children’s rights.

According to Mulinge (2010), since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989, many African countries have made clear efforts to protect children’s rights. The ratification of the CRC and adoption of supporting optional protocols and conventions (e.g., the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the Supplementary Protocol to the International Convention on Organized Crime to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the ILO Convention 18) have yet to bring about the desired goals across most of the continent. Similarly, the passing of legislation and local initiatives to fortify the protective environment for children have not been adequate and sufficient in themselves to fulfil children’s rights (Mulinge 2010.).

However, African governments and more specifically the Mozambican government's acceptance of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child under the auspices of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was meant, from my point of view, to satisfy the image of Mozambique for donor agencies such as UNICEF, not taking into account pertinent issues such as the way communities view children in Mozambique, and the implication of this in a local context.

The multicultural aspects of Mozambique and or Africa as a whole are not taken into account in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child nor in National Child Welfare programmes. The latter are all defined on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child framework and neglect in this case, among others, the local conceptions of community responsibilities and duties regarding children and childrearing, the meanings given to childhood and child representations, and the ability of the community to engage in meaningful participation in the planning and management of basic programmes for children.

Mozambique has failed, to a very high degree, to implement the legal tools that the country ratified long ago. This lack of implementation on a policy level is, on the one hand, associated with the low financial capacity of the government. On the other hand, factors such as corruption, HIV/AIDS, global warming, and human rights abuse continue being the principal social, economic and political conditions that influence the difficulties in implementing the general aspects of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Findings from this study reflect the way that children's rights are perceived in Mozambique when it comes to street children's push and pull factors. However, there is still a need to ask what the factors are behind the increasing number of street children, and how this issue can be addressed from a horizontal perspective.

In this study I recommend the need to ensure that the perception of children's rights at the community level is integrated into the policy level. The pattern of domestic violence associated with the low level of knowledge of children's rights and the high levels of poverty seem to be the causes which influence the street children phenomena.

For example, the local leader in Boane was asked about his perception of the rights of children as motivation for children running away to live on the streets and he answered as follows:

“Here every child has the right to have family protection and have his own duties, such as helping to take care of the cattle, domestic matters and contributing to the family economy. If a child is too lazy to help at home, what happens is that he just runs away as those fools here, who just decided to stay in the city and have an easy life...they are lazy, that is why they ran away, not because we punish them. In a family, if you do not follow the rules, you will definitely be punished and things are as they are” (Boane village’s local leader 29/09/2009).

During the implementation of the fieldwork project, throughout the street children’s active participation, we discussed the possible alternatives of social change in street children’s lives. The most highlighted issue here was the street children’s social reintegration process within their families of origin and communities.

However, reintegration by itself does not solve the problem of street children; there is a need to define integrated policies that will help to resolve the situations of deep poverty, lack of understanding of children’s rights, domestic violence and socio-cultural backgrounds of social development from the community point of view, since the phenomena of street children is complex and multidimensional.

A review of the literature confirms this position, since, in most policy definitions and strategies for child protection, the local understanding is not taken into consideration, and as policies are not flexible, they do not accommodate local perceptions of children’s rights and child welfare. This fact is associated with the limitations in the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a guiding instrument in addressing children’s rights; this is due to the lack of a clear definition of political standards on matters of domestic violence, child labour, child abuse, and so on. This factor represents a major challenge for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the contextual framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The inefficiency of legal instruments adopted by the Mozambican government to protect and promote children’s rights may be linked to difficulties in defining standards for action that reflect the characteristics of the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts in which the government operates. Therefore, there is an urgent need to adopt

strategies that take into account the definition of needs and priorities for the area of protecting and promoting children's rights, and ensuring that the intervention strategies should reflect the cultural trends, economic and social policies of the country.

Yet, the main feature behind the street children phenomena is poverty. There is practically an infinite number of activities being carried out non-stop by the government as well as local and international NGOs to reduce poverty and promote general well-being in society as a whole.

In Maputo about 40 different organizations work on the children's rights issue (LINK 2008), and most of them focus their approach on the street children phenomena, but due to the inadequate design of the programmes and the definition of child protection in a contextual basis, there are arbitrary definitions based on questionable assumptions about what constitutes a risk to children or a violation of their rights, which gives rise to a weak relationship with reality.

The interest in street children phenomena is largely found within national and international institutions (government and NGOs) devoted to promoting and protecting the children's rights. De Barros & Tajú (1999; 2001), as well as Save the Children UK (2006), Tvedten et al. (2008), UNICEF (2009) and FDC (2006) are some authors and institutions who dedicate some of their time examining issues related to the promotion and protection of children's rights with reference to international conventions for the promotion and protection of children's rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, the Family Law, the Civil Code, public policies and programmes, and government strategies that guide actions and interventions on children's issues.

Actually, these authors face obstacles in including the phenomena of street children as children's rights abuse, and the first obstacle is related to the universal concept of 'child' emanating from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which define a child as "every human being under 18 years, unless there is an applicable law for them" (Tvedten et al. 2008, 112).

This definition, which was also adopted by national legal instruments such as the National Constitution, the Civil Code and the Family Law, is in some way very rigid,

not allowing for any adaptation to the dynamics of socio-cultural groups that constitute the Mozambican cultural matrix⁴¹.

While referring to the need for harmonization in the concept of child, De Barros & Tajú (1999) emphasize that one of the great difficulties of institutions that develop activities for the protection and promotion of the human rights of the child focuses on the lack of consensus on that concept. There is, furthermore, a claim that it is important to take into account the socio-cultural factors that influence the definition of this concept and the allocation of spaces and social roles specific to each group (De Barros & Tajú 1999; Sanhantamba 2001).

Therefore, the street children phenomena is approached as a consequence of practical socio-cultural legitimacy that is built into the chain of values, norms, customs, beliefs, roles and social spaces that are assigned to the child throughout the socialization process, misrepresenting the fact that these practices are formally considered forms of domestic violence and child abuse motivated by economic interests and / or direct social benefit to adults in families or communities (Save the Children UK 2006; UNICEF 2004).

In fact, it is nevertheless important to recognize that, in the Mozambican context, the child cannot be analyzed from a perspective that considers him/her a universal category as established in the legal framework of Mozambique. It is appropriate to assume that dynamics of social and cultural practices determine how children's rights are preserved and promoted locally.

During a conversation, the local leader in Bobole (one of the villages where we reintegrated one boy) was asked what he thought should be considered a child and how a child should be treated and his answer was:

“Look at that man there (pointing to a man of more or less 30 years), that one is a child, because he cannot feed himself, he lives with his parents and cannot do anything on his own. You see that one there (pointing to a boy of about 15 years old in a small shop selling different goods), that is a grown-up man, he has his own house, he has a shop and I am sure soon he will

⁴¹ In Mozambique there are about 54 ethnic groups with their own cultural backgrounds on the meaning given to child and child-rearing responsibilities.

have a wife, because he can sustain himself and help his family also with his business”.

This position shows how complex the understanding of the word ‘child’ is and what should be considered children’s rights in this context.

However, to analyze a phenomenon such as street children represents a timely position of cultural awareness. De Barros & Tajú (1999) mention that the definition of a child varies according to the context, time, gender and social class and, in the case of Mozambique, children occupy intermediate categories, where adults have the power to decide whether the child can or cannot exercise his/her rights.

An example of this position is found in the following statements:

“He should be able to contribute to his own welfare; he must help carrying water⁴², he must wash his clothes and must help the family work here. He must help his mother here (his stepmother) in everything she wants, otherwise, if he doesn’t he won’t get food. He is not a baby anymore; he is not simply a child. He is a grown-up boy and has enough energy to do his duties” (Alex’s father during a conversation in August 2009 after the social reintegration)

These statements clearly show that the starting point to address the phenomena of street children in Mozambique, as well as in many parts of the world, as a situation that interferes with children's rights, must take into account the factors that define the local socio-cultural matrix and influence the process of primary socialization of the individual. I refer to elements such as the unequal distribution of power between adults and children, the access to education and cross-cutting factors such as poverty and HIV/AIDS with a view to harmonize and define the parameters of intervention.

De Barros & Tajú (1999) state that, in the Mozambican context, the term ‘child’ is a reflection of the unequal distribution of power between adults and those who are not adults. Even without referring to subordination, as does Osório (2000), De Barros &

⁴² It is common in Maputo to see a child less than 12 years old carrying a container of about 25 litres of water for about 500 metres and in the countryside you see a child carrying this much water for about 2 or 3 km)

Tajú. (1999) refer to the socio-cultural matrix of Mozambique which puts children at a subordinate level.

An example of this is the following statement:

“This is my son and he should follow the rules of our family [community] and he should never disobey his father, uncle, aunt, grandparents and neighbours. When I say no it is no and there is no space for discussion. But this kid is possessed, he doesn’t know what respect is, and he doesn’t accept us as his family at all, because when we say no, he keeps doing it” (Paito’s uncle when during his reintegration August 2009).

It is indeed necessary to take into consideration these aspects presented in Chapter II with regards to Brofenbrenner’s ecological theory. From this perspective, the push and pull factors of the street children phenomena and the local understanding of children’s rights come together; they are not separate elements. These elements are also integrated into the social structure of the society, from the micro level of interaction to the global level.

8.4. Summary

The goal of this chapter was to present a discussion on the push and pull factors of the street children phenomena and on how children’s rights are perceived locally.

Findings from the study show that the main push factors behind the street children phenomena are as follows: the state of the economy, poverty, lack of educational opportunities, rural-urban migration, social changes (mainly linked to the weakening of family structures and family abuse), high rates of mortality due to HIV/AIDS and malaria, global warming effects (droughts, cyclones), natural disasters (earthquakes, cyclones, etc.) and children’s rights’ violations as an accepted practice at a local level.

Some of the pull factors mentioned were the desire for independence and freedom, for economic security, the excitement and enchantment of living in cities, and the slight hope of achieving a higher social position through improved living standards.

The study also concludes that there is a need to keep in mind the need for a more socially and culturally informed approach to understanding street children's motivation to move onto the streets.

On issues concerning children's rights at the local level, the study demonstrates that maltreatment, family relationships, parenting relations, and domestic violence, constitute more decisive and determinant push factors for the child; in most cases these are not violations of children's rights at a local level but are tools for educating and preparing the child as men and women needed for society in the future. The lack of a clear meaning of 'child' in public policies in relation to local cultural patterns is one of the most influential factors for the weak implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in most Mozambican rural areas. There is a need to redefine public policies on child protection in conjunction with the cultural matrix of Mozambique in order to meet the needs of real child protection. The following chapter presents the general conclusions of this study in a summarized form.

Chapter 9 : Addressing SCA praxeology as social work practice

*A conclusion is the place
where you get tired of
thinking. Arthur Bloch*

This study addresses several issues related to street children, socio-cultural animation and community social work practice. The study aimed at explaining the extent to which socio-cultural animation praxeology can be utilized as community social work practice with street children in Mozambique?

In line with this research question, and as a response to it, four principal conclusions are drawn from the discussion addressed so far:

- a) The fact the street children phenomena is complex, multidimensional, culturally embedded and a global problem;
- b) The fact that, in Mozambican and in many other contexts, there are structural changes that influence the issue of childhood and the role of the community in addressing children's rights;
- c) The fact that SCA praxeology is a community-based social work practice that can be addressed in other contexts; and
- d) The fact that there is a need for a deeper research on the application of SCA as community-based social work in order for it to be used in different contexts.

9.1. Street children phenomena as a complex, multidimensional, culturally embedded and global problem

A review of the literature showed that the issue of street children is not solely a problem of developing countries, as in many cases it seems to be. It is possible to find different patterns of street life in almost every social context. However, these patterns vary from context to context and, in addition, the push and pull factors for street life are different in each country according to the individual country's social, cultural and economic factors.

The data concerning street children's situation worldwide is unclear. A review of the literature reveals that there are discrepancies on the number of street children worldwide, on the way they live, what their characteristics are and how this problem can be dealt with in order to provide them with better social support. There are also differences in terms of gender and age within street children's groups in different realities. These discrepancies are related to the difficulty in providing a consensual definition of who are and who are not street children, and to make things even worse, there are different perceptions of who is or who is not a child in different social contexts.

This also study demonstrated that the definition of the term 'child' should not be universal even if there is an interaction between the global and local realities, i.e., the meaning of a child at a local basis is influenced by specific cultural, political and economic factors which in turn are directly or indirectly influenced by other external factors.

Due to the heterogeneous nature and multidimensionality of the street children phenomena in different contexts, this study recommends a context-based approach, where the concept, characteristics, and trends in the increasing street children phenomena are based on a local cultural, economic and political context, not relying on global definitions of street children.

However, while approaching the phenomenon of street children in a context-based perspective, there is a need to address this problem as a global problem. This is to say, as René Dubois argued in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, that problems can turn into action only by considering the ecological, economic, and cultural differences of our local surroundings, in a situation where the natural and social units maintain or recapture their identity, yet interplay with each other through a rich system of communications worldwide (Dubois 1972 quoted by Eblen & Eblen 1994).

When it comes to the context in which this study took place, in this case the city of Maputo in Mozambique, factors such as extreme poverty, high rates of HIV/AIDS infection and mortality, deep impacts of natural disasters and economic imbalances represent the principal features behind the street children phenomena. These features are even worsened by deep structural, economic and social adjustments and readjustments

in the social services, which in turn weakens the traditional and community systems of child protection.

This study addressed the process of the social reintegration of street children within their families of origin and communities. However, as can be understood in this report, reintegration by itself is not an end, and it does not solve the problem of street children; there is a need to define integrated policies that will help to resolve the situations of deep poverty, as well as other questions such as the lack of understanding of children's rights, domestic violence and the socio-cultural backgrounds of social development from the community point of view, since the phenomena of street children is complex and multidimensional.

By tackling the multidimensionality character of street children, I recall the ecological discussion addressed in Chapter II of this study, where it is demonstrated that the street children phenomena has various facets, starting from the individual and family level (micro system) in interaction with the neighbourhood and surrounding community (meso system) that construct and shape the basic elements of human kind (the process of primary socialization), in this case the child. These two levels are directly or indirectly influenced by the society (policies, strategies, laws, etc. in Mozambique) in which the family and the community is integrated and, in turn, families and communities have a certain level of influence. Mozambique is not an isolated country; it is affected by global factors and legislation such as the Universal Human Rights Charter, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Kyoto Protocol, global warming, and climate changes which take place through time and space and which directly or indirectly influence social life at the local level.

This means that, while approaching the issue of street children phenomena in Mozambique, one must see it from a local context and at the same time be aware of different social, cultural, political, economic and psychological influences of the local, national, regional and international contexts. The street children phenomena should and must not be seen as an isolated problem of Mozambique, but it should be approached from the context in which is located.

9.2. The issue of childhood and community structural changes and its impacts on children's rights

The study presented very general understandings of the concept of the community and the street children community. Based on these concepts, I also brought into the discussion the meaning of child and childhood from an African perspective on a very general basis.

However, I also argued that these concepts are very contextual, and they should not be taken for granted or generalized throughout Mozambique as a whole, nor even be extrapolated as the only feature of a Mozambican understanding of child and childhood. There are many other aspects that need to be taken into consideration while addressing the issue of child, childhood and child protection in Mozambique.

The contextual aspects of child and childhood have a profound influence on the way policies and child welfare programmes are defined and implemented. My interest in these statements, which might seem too general, is to recall the need for a localized comprehension of social reality in order to start any kind of community social work.

With this statement I am interested in calling for the need to draw attention to the meanings of child and childhood in the different social contexts of Mozambique, Africa and other social settings. In the case of Mozambique, these concepts have different meanings from the official definitions (based on age and focusing on the definitions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child). An example of this is the fact that in some parts of Mozambique a child is defined on the basis of his/her physical development and not on age differentiations (what his body can do, how and what he does now). There is also the differentiation between a female child and male child which is associated with the community's expectations of the child (what the community expects a male or female child to do).

These differentiations play an important role in how the community addresses the rights of each child, and in most cases these aspects are not taken into account in national child protection programmes.

In general, the issue of child protection and child welfare in Mozambique has deep traditional roots, where the responsibility of caring for a child is not solely his/her biological parents: it is a community responsibility, where the psychological, moral,

cultural and sometimes financial support is provided to guarantee the socialization of the child according to the community social settings. This is a very common practice in most rural settings.

However, Mozambique has undergone deep social transformation, from the war of liberation to the civil war, where families and communities have been displaced from their origins, and many families had found themselves living in new social settings such as urban or suburban contexts. As a consequence of this exodus from rural to urban environments, new economic and social problems arose, such as lack of employment, lack of housing, and urban poverty, among others. Associated with these issues are the economic and structural changes, on the one hand, that have seriously reduced the capacity of parents to be responsible by themselves for the nurturance of their children and, on the other hand, the increasing global calamities and social problems such as droughts, cyclones, and HIV/AIDS, that have deepened the poverty line of communities and families at large.

These structural and social patterns have demolished the traditional view of a child as belonging to the community, and therefore, communities are no longer reliable as providers of child welfare as in previous generations, besides the fact that there are weakening social capital and solidarity structures due to poverty, especially within communities located in suburban areas or urban neighbourhood settings.

Based on these aspects, I used Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to understand the phenomena of street children, as a unique group of people influenced by the context in which they are immersed. Nevertheless, the street children's existence is directly and indirectly influenced by the society, and this is also influenced by other global elements. These influences are reciprocal and are not only one way.

It is because of these global, local and communal aspects that influence street children's lives that we can find some similarities and differences in the street children's push and pull factors, understanding the phenomena both locally and globally.

In a global context of the street children phenomena, social work, as a problem-solving profession and policy influencing discipline, is used in this study to understand the nature of community within which street children are embedded and then to develop professional practice from an emancipatory perspective. It is on this basis that I address SCA praxeology as a social work practice for a community-based approach that can be

used in mediating and negotiating relationships, promoting awareness and the commitment of community members in solving social problems, and at the same time, with the hope that this study will contribute not only for the construction of awareness within communities and individuals, but also within decision makers and international institutions working with people in difficult situations worldwide. .

9.3. SCA praxeology as a community-based social work practice

In this study I addressed the issue of child protection and community work as the main topic of the study, where I look at communities as active actors of social change, taking SCA praxeology as the mediator in processes involving the transformation of reality which is sustained by the need of awakening people (street children) to exercise their active participation for social change.

From my perspective, it is of paramount importance that community members are not mere users of services, but are actors and authors of practices in local development where SCA praxeology is an approach of development characterized by a process of improving the cultural, economic, educational and social needs of people through community-based initiatives, and the enhancement of human resources and materials.

My primary interest in addressing this study from a methodological perspective was based on the fact that in Mozambique there are many national and international organizations implementing child protection projects, but the results of their different intervention perspectives seemed to me to be scarcely visible.

As the CanalMoz news (12/05/2010) demonstrates, about 5,000 national and international organizations operate in Mozambique, but their impact is almost invisible. In Maputo alone there are 40 national and international NGOs (LINK 2008) working directly or indirectly on children's rights and child welfare issues, and in Maputo there are about 1,500 street children being targeted by these 40 NGOs (LINK 2008); however the results of their work are almost undetectable, since that the number of street children seems to be increasing instead of reducing.

By looking at these numbers, my first assumption was that most of the street children's official programmes and projects do not look at the contextual and cultural

backgrounds, and that these programmes are implemented from a top-down perspective, not taking street children's participation and their communities into consideration. This position was confirmed during informal conversations with street children and other organizations' staff, who felt ignored in decision-making processes on issues related to their lives and futures.

I do not claim here that none of the development programmes being implemented in Mozambique take the context into account, nor that they all adopt a top/down approach, but I vehemently claim that there is a need to rethink and recheck the philosophy of their work and to recognize the fact that many organizations ignore the reality at the local level. It is, indeed, true that there are many other projects being implemented from a bottom/up perspective with which I might have not been in contact, as the process of documentation is still lacking in Mozambique, and, in addition, there are many other projects being run from a community perspective, as the FDC (2006) report demonstrates.

My position here is that the majority of these programmes, besides their willingness to achieve important and interesting objectives and to have an ample budget and strong administrative structures, do not achieve positive results, because the phenomena of street children is increasing. This is related to the fact that most of these institutions and programmes simply ignore the context in which they act.

For me, it does not make sense that so many NGOs, together with government organizations, are not able to provide protection and find a solution to the street children phenomena at least at the city level. The problem might be due to the way they address the issue and the kind of methodological tools they develop to resolve the problems, giving priority to placing children in rehabilitation centres or reintegrating them back home without looking at the background factors of the problem.

This is not an issue of Mozambique only; it is also a problem in many other countries around the world where development programmes are being implemented under oppressive principles, where local citizens are not seen as being capable of critical consciousness (Freire 1983) and able to produce change, and therefore their culture, values, ideals, religions, thoughts and lifestyle are not taken into account. Top/down development programmes become in this way new forms of oppression, where societies and communities are forced to make changes in their life according to external values

which do not match their real context. This is one of the most important reasons for the failure of most development programmes.

It is based on these assumptions that I propose SCA praxeology as a democratic community-based social work practice, by taking into account local people's participation in the definition of strategies for social change.

In this study, SCA praxeology as a social work approach is an inalienable part of community social work practice where the participation of the collective, in this case street children's active involvement, plays an important role. By doing so, I defend the idea that emancipatory social work needs to be undertaken for local development processes with a focus on new ways of looking at reality from the perspective of local community members working with their own set of skills, values and principles from their own cultural roots.

The application of SCA praxeology with street children provided tools to raise awareness of the role each individual street child can achieve for the common good, and through active participation and permanent interaction, it was possible to provoke social change in the community of street children where the project was targeted. As argued by Gillet (2006; 2001), SCA is a horizontal practice, where professionals and local community members come together to identify problems and alternatives for solutions (realistic utopias), design plans and then intervene to resolve the problem

Having as a background Gillet's statements and the Freirian humanistic principles of reflexive praxis and emancipatory education/education for freedom, the objective of the study was to address SCA praxeology as a social work approach in a Mozambican context. This objective was achieved by portraying the application of a socio-cultural animation perspective in promoting the active participation of street children for social change in their lives, developing an emancipatory social work practice through the development of consciousness and self-awareness of street children, promoting children's rights within street children's groups and communities and among their communities of origin, and in providing substantive information on street children's needs, traits, strengths, defences and conflicts in order to make local communities and the world aware of the phenomena.

Findings from the fieldwork demonstrate that these objectives have been fully achieved, where street children actively participated and played an important role in the

social transformation of their own social reality. In this study, SCA praxeology is seen as an emancipatory social work practice, where street children became aware of possible solutions to their problems through dialogical action, active participation and interaction. Through active participation, street children were able to make informed decisions and plan for a better future (realistic utopias), and then together as a team it was possible to put into practice most of these utopias.

This was possible by taking into account all principles of SCA as a philosophy of praxis and as a hermeneutic-humanitarian approach, where concepts of love, care, respect, realistic utopias, faith, trust, relationship, empathy, commitment, and so on permeated the research practice in its attempt to model this philosophical approach.

As a research practice, this study can be questioned for its use of such subjective elements, and it may be regarded as tenuous, incomplete and even rather vague. However, these expressions and concepts come from the SCA research practice itself, where there are no research objects, no research data collection, and no objective observation of reality. In SCA praxeologic research practice, there is a concern for people's emancipation and social development through interaction and active participation, with the ultimate goal of promoting the social transformation of their reality.

By aiming at the social transformation of social reality and by taking into consideration the participant's subjective aspects such as love, care, respect, support, empathy, interaction, this research practice becomes rather controversial from the viewpoint of most research perspectives.

Taking into consideration my ontological position, which is a hermeneutic-humanistic approach where active participation, direct observations, dialogical interactions and conversations are applied as research methods, this research practice is justified.

SCA praxeology highlights the need to integrate theory and practice by working *with* people rather than working *for* people, highlighting the need for social research to be focused on developing practical outcomes as a response to people's needs and interests.

It is a research approach which does not exist without practice and it happens within and through practice, consisting of a moral and ethical commitment which starts with cooperation and aims at improving social reality. This research practice starts from a critical analysis of the real world and actuality, and, through a hermeneutic reading and understanding of that analysis and the reality, it creates utopias ending with the definition of plans and the realization of such utopias.

By following SCA principles, it was possible to promote the active participation of street children, shifting from a situation of total apathy and absence of participation to limited acceptance and finally to active participation and the full transformation of their lives.

Nevertheless, these changes in terms of participation should be understood and analyzed from the contextual frame of this study, as they can be seen differently from many other scientific perspectives such as psychology, sociology, and economics, among others.

Nonetheless, the participation of street children in the study will have future implications in their lives, where their experiences will constitute elements of a lifelong heritage and will be there as long as they exist as human beings. The self-consciousness and confidence that has been built among street children will probably boost their capabilities of getting reintegrated into new settings of social life and in being able to face the accompanying challenges.

Findings from the study show that the state of the economy, poverty, lack of educational opportunities, rural to urban migration, social changes (mainly linked to the weakening of family structures and family abuse), high rates of mortality due to HIV/AIDS and malaria, global warming effects (droughts, cyclones) natural disasters (earthquakes, cyclones) and so on, and children's rights violations which are seen as accepted practices at a local level, are the main push factors for the street children phenomena in the Mozambican context.

The desire for independence and freedom, economic security, the excitement and enchantment of living in cities, and the hope of achieving a higher social position through improved living standards are seen here as some of the pull factors.

9.4. The issue of children's rights

The study also addressed the issue of children's rights as a contested aspect in different environments; for there are discrepancies in the way people in diverse contexts understand and perceive children's rights.

In this aspect, the study demonstrates that such factors as maltreatment, family relationships, parenting relations, and domestic violence, constitute more decisive and determinant push factors for the street children phenomena. In most cases at a local level (in some communities) these are not violations of children's rights but are, indeed, tools for educating and preparing the child for his/her future role in society as a man or woman. The lack of a clear meaning of "child" in public policies in relation to local cultural patterns is one of the most influential factors for the weak implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in most Mozambican rural areas. This is also associated with the fact that most social policies being defined in the majority of developing countries are recommended by external structures which do not take into account the cultural, religious, economic and social context.

This means that there is a need to redefine public policies on child protection in conjunction with the cultural matrix of Mozambique in order to increase the number of child protection measures.

As we can see, the study brought into discussion some examples of local understandings of children's rights that conflict with the conventional definition of the child as seen in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in national, legal definitions of the child. This means that it is important not to have an a priori definition of the child in the Mozambican context. There is a need to assume and understand how the dynamics of social and cultural practices determine and define children's rights and how are they promoted at a local level.

The main message of this study is the importance played by a more socially and culturally informed approach in understanding the street children's phenomena. At a local level there is a need to implement development programmes with street children or any other group of people who are systematically rejected and oppressed by global social structures, such as people in extreme poverty, HIV/AIDS, hunger, wars, refugees, emigrants, sex slaves, people in prisons, where their participation is seen as crucial and totally respected.

This study brings into question the need for a more human social work practice, where relationships, commitment, trust, empathy, love and care are accepted concepts of practice. It also calls for the need of an emancipatory research practice, where, instead of the subjects merely being research objects or passive beneficiaries of research practices, they become active subjects capable of social transformation if given a chance to do so.

9.5. Research limitations and barriers

With regard to the research limitations, I would first state that I have never encountered any perfect and universal research approach that envisages a global research practice for all contexts and social realities.

This is the same with this study, which, from my own self-evaluation, has profound methodological limitations. These limitations have much to do with the reliability of the results of the research analysis in relation to other aspects of the conceptual-analytical research strategies in general. These limitations can be found in my personal interpretation of social change and the street children's active participation throughout the research practice, interpretations that are not objective and cannot be experienced on an equal level in all contexts where a similar research approach may be implemented, and cannot even be defined in a similar way as they are here presented.

This study also has conceptual limitations due to the fact that it brings into discussion concepts like street children's active participation, the application of love, care, empathy, interaction and the establishment of relationships; these are wide concepts whose meaning in each social reality is difficult to interpret objectively. It is indeed true that these aspects, which I consider limitations, can be seen as strengths of the work as well, because I bring different features of the meaning of social change and transformation into this study.

Another limitation drawn from this study is the fact that it uses the concept of SCA praxeology without offering much empirical evidence on its usefulness and effectiveness in real-world practice, simplifying the situation by mentioning some projects and research writing that took place in Brazil, France, and Spain, but with no evidence from Mozambique.

However, although it is relevant to examine the success of SCA praxeology in the light of real-life settings, it is also relevant to analyze the theoretical assumptions as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the different critical social work practices, an issue that is lacking in this study, as it does not present any account of the underlying theoretical assumptions of the critical theories supporting SCA praxeology in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.

Also, I have some uncertainty concerning the applicability of SCA praxeology in all contexts of social work practice, because the origins of SCA, its ideological foundations and, background philosophies, are differently interpreted according to the context of social work practice. This can also be associated with the lack of comprehensive empirical evaluation.

The proposed SCA praxeology community social work was only implemented in this case with street children and to make it more acceptable and applicable in Mozambique and other contexts, similar studies should take place with different groups and problems in a comparative perspective as well.

Thus, given that SCA praxeology seen as a hallmark of action research (Kurki 2000a; Gillet 2006), this study may be criticized for not applying traditional action research practices. However, it is important to keep in mind that SCA praxeology is a very context-based approach, and that theory and praxis come together as a consequence of action, where knowledge is produced through reflexive action, making it possible for the “theory” to stem from the practice rather than originate outside the problem setting (Oberg 1990). This does not mean that all action research practice follows the same procedure; there are situations in action research projects where the theory can be known before it is tested in practice (McCutcheon & Jung 1990; McKay & Marshall 2001; Mumford 2001).

This study also has limitations due to the fact that it is mainly a description of work activities. It tells us little or nothing about culture (its Mozambican context), symbols (Mozambique is a multicultural country; it is totally useless to try to explain these fully in this work), context (social landscape) and meanings. It tends to ignore the crucial multicultural influence on the study in general.

In terms of research barriers, the most intriguing difficulties during the research process are associated with language issues. The fieldwork practice took place in

Maputo, where the official language is Portuguese. However, during the field practice with street children there was a need for a language shift, from Portuguese to Xichangana⁴³ or to street children's slang and at the same time it was necessary to register the notes in slang, Xichangana or in Portuguese for later reflection and discussion. This exercise was challenging and even difficult, and in many cases I felt quite desperate in trying to give sense to expressions that were very difficult to translate from slang to Portuguese and from Portuguese to English, which is the language of the study..

Cultural stereotypes were significant barriers to field research with the street children. Street children are a marginalized group in society; they are rejected and associated with criminality, and in most cases very few people have any interest in them. During the request for financial support from, for instance, local business shops, most people reacted to street children as being dangerous, and they felt it was useless to attempt to help them.

“You are wasting your time with them. These kids have no solution; they are freaks and many times they will pretend to be good people and suddenly they are the ones who will rob you” (said one of the traders in a shop).

To go through all these stereotypes and get acceptance and support was one of the most difficult tasks, and there is a need to make a clear discussion on de-stereotyping the street children phenomena. For this matter, further research and disclosure on the issue should take place.

Another barrier to field research came from the organized structure of the street children's (members of the research team) everyday life. Since we could not and were not supposed to make them stop their normal routine, we had to plan our activities in such a way that they could participate in them during their free time, otherwise we would have to pay for their time. This was challenging, because we had little time and few resources to make all this happen; there was a deeply held concern about the freedom of the children to join or not join a certain activity due to other personal issues.

⁴³ Xichangana is one of the spoken languages in Maputo and Gaza provinces. Mozambique has about 54 ethnic groups with different languages of Bantu origins

Time and money has been a common research barrier throughout the research process. To implement such an ambitious project in six months was one of the biggest limitations, since much information could and should be gathered to make this study more informed. Time matters were also accompanied by financial considerations; finding the necessary 5,000 euros for such a project was in itself a challenge.

9.6. Implications for social work practice in Mozambique and other contexts - suggestions for further studies

This study addressed the issue of street children's participation in changing their social lives, by promoting activities that could lead them to constantly question what could be better for each one of them living on the streets of Maputo.

The focus of child protection, social work and street children from a SCA praxeologic approach, was to promote the active participation of a research team, where street children became subjects of their own social life and active mentors of the changes that have occurred throughout the implementation of the fieldwork project. The participants in the research are those who created their own culture and experienced it, who created the solutions for their problems and who evaluated the steps that would have to be followed or have been followed so far.

Thus, street children as a social problem can be studied as a cultural phenomenon associated with multiple structural factors, so it needs to be addressed in a multidimensional perspective, applying comparative approaches and cross-methodological aspects in order to bring more accurate information on the street children phenomena at both a local and global aspect.

The study is meaningful for Mozambican social work, which is in its state of 'birth', by raising discussions of social reality, which are seen as the 'normal' landscape of everyday lives, and are seen, in most cases, in uncritical ways.

It adds a contribution to social workers and professionals in other fields as well since it recalls the need to reflect on many issues related to youth problems, street children and social discrimination, taking into account the personal and collective

factors or motivations behind these problems, as well as the perceptions and definitions given to these aspects at a local level.

The focus in this study was to illustrate SCA praxeology as social work practice with people in complex situations within a multi-cultural setting, widening, in this sense, social work practices in terms of the diversity of practice when it highlights the contextualized approach of social work, taking the group and community as the starting point of problem-solving and prevention.

As mentioned in Chapter I of this study, the issue of street children is a global one and should be seen as such. Most developed countries have their share of street children phenomena. This means that this study contributes to understanding the phenomena of street children and the possibility to address their problems from a SCA standpoint, and I believe it will be relevant to social workers addressing the issue of youth and social development worldwide as well.

SCA praxeology does not aim to give instructions for better practice but to stimulate discussion and increase the actors' understanding of the situation and, from then on, they take action to resolve the issue in question.

This study marks the opening chapter in Mozambican social work practice and research, since there are no previous studies from a practical perspective with children and families in difficult situations from the cultural perspective of Mozambique, and more specifically, I did not encounter any document reporting any research or practice under similar circumstances in Mozambique. The study thus represents an important and original step in terms of applying a methodology to a new social setting.

The findings of this study provide useful insights on the lives of children who live and work on the streets without the support of their families. Although the majority of the children adapt positively to the conditions of street life, a small minority, for reasons that have yet to be explored, use maladaptive mechanisms to cope with the stresses of street life. Clearly, children expressed their desire to be reunited with their families, especially with those members who were emotionally close to them.

Socio-economic deprivation and/or the intolerable family relationships at home were often cited as major reasons for their unwillingness to return home. The need for nurturing emotional relationships with family members may be reflected in the

connections that children seek with substitute families on the street. For most children, the support of their friendship networks was crucial in finding food, work, shelter and medical care. The utilization of the services offered by non-governmental agencies was also beneficial to the children in their need.

The results of this study make me believe that social work practice that focuses on personal experiences and on the personal commitment of a group or community represents a positive contribution to individual and social improvements. In today's reality this acquires a new significance and importance, when we appreciate the continually emerging groups which, in some way, provide new approaches for care and the satisfaction of social needs and rights. These needs and rights have been unaddressed due to the state's withdrawal from some of its responsibilities in the social sector. I have no doubt of the importance of SCA praxeologic social work practice to improve coexistence in terms of solidarity, personal growth, problem-solving, effective citizenship and democracy.

The research undertaken for this study therefore represents an original contribution to knowledge by applying SCA as a social work approach in a social setting where social work as a profession does not exist, namely Mozambique. The study's originality stems from the fact that it developed a type of innovative practice, namely SCA praxeologic social work practice with street children, which is uncommon to most social work research perspectives.

Epilogue

In the research report there is a lack of information about the changes at an institutional level at the CCA and on the later situation of street children who decided to stay on the streets and not return home. Information concerning what might have happened to those six street children who were reintegrated is also lacking. This is due to the fact that, first of all, it was not possible to observe the changes at an institutional level in such a short time, and, secondly, because there was such little time to have a thorough follow-up, and, thirdly, because there were not enough financial resources to conduct a follow-up. Nevertheless, four months after the end of the fieldwork, the CCA administration maintained phone contact with me and provided me with information about follow-ups and the subsequent impact of the fieldwork practice.

According to the CCA reports and photographs (obtained by phone calls and through e-mail exchange), two of the children who were integrated in the institution's working groups became powerful leaders: Manuel directs a theatre group at the CCA, and Maria is working as a HIV/AIDS activist in the same organization, and both have been making important contributions to the CCA work practice. Maria and Manuel have, by themselves moved off the streets, as they now have a salary and are able to rent a room for themselves.

Manuel's theatre group performed in public for the first time in February, and several organizations have invited them to perform in other places and, by doing so, promote the idea of children's rights and child welfare from the street children's point of view. The CCA is helping Manuel's theatre group in all these activities, for which street educators coordinate the financial issues and Manuel defines the content of the performance.

The report also mentions that staff members have been contributing greatly to the implementation of activities at an institutional level. By the end of the fieldwork practice, five football teams had been formed by other staff members of the CCA, but now there are eleven football teams and all staff members play football with the street children every Friday. There is also a possibility of having matches with official football players at the city level.

A one-day school programme on the streets is one of the new programmes that has been designed by staff members, where street children are taught how to write and read, at least once a week.

At least three of the six reintegrated street children have been in contact with the street educator who participated in the research practice, and they have been enrolled in school and are all studying.

This information was provided by phone and e-mail, through my permanent contact with the CCA and its staff members. Some pictures of these activities were also provided.

During my holiday visit to Mozambique in June 2010 I had the opportunity to visit Paito, Alex and Jaimito (ex-street children, now reintegrated within their family environment). Paito and Jaimito have been doing well and had nothing special to report, but Alex (refer to Alex's reintegration in Boane for his background story) is the only one who started crying when I met him. He mentioned that he had not been treated well and was not happy back home. He also mentioned that he only stays at home because he respects our efforts in helping him and the other children to meet their relatives. According to him, his stepmother does not give him food and sometimes he has to do all the housework to earn it. He says that life on the street was far better than at home now.

This meeting made me think about the many future challenges this child and probably other children may be facing, and some questions came up that I did not think of during my research work, such as the possible negative implications of the SCA approach. Individually, did my study result in a good outcome for each child or not? How do I evaluate and define a good outcome in this case (taking Alex's situation into account)?

These questions keep passing through my mind every now and then, but I am sure that one day I will have to find an opportunity to find an answer to them.

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Appendixes⁴⁴

APPENDIX 1: STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH SEMINAR TO CCA STAFF MEMBERS

Methodologies of social work: application of Socio-cultural Animation with street children

| Item | Content | Methodology | Time | Observations |
|---|---|---|---------------|---|
| Introduction | Social work and social action: the role of street workers | Dialogue Oral debate and individual presentations. | 9:00-9:30 | Each participant presents his/her opinion regarding the role of street educators, psychologist, nurses, etc. in social work. |
| Street children | Definitions of street children in different contexts. | Powerpoint presentation and debate | 9:30 – 10:00 | Presentation of different definitions and categorizations of street children by participants and the key speaker. |
| Socio-cultural Animation | Definitions and perspectives | Powerpoint presentation and debate | 10:00-10:30 | Presentation of different definitions and individual reflection on Socio-cultural animation as a type of participation with street children |
| Coffee break | Coffee break | Coffee break | 10:30-10:45 | Coffee break |
| Application of Socio-cultural animation with street children: Reflections | Phases of Socio-cultural Animation intervention | Presentation and collective discussion | 10:45-12:00 | Each participant gives his/her opinion how these stages would take place in practice. |
| Lunch break | Lunch break | Lunch break | 12:00-13:15 | Lunch break |
| Exercises | Representing an intervention through Socio-cultural Animation | Participative theatre and debate | 13:15 – 15:00 | All participants set out theatre activities in groups and represent the implementation of Socio-cultural animation. |
| Discussion | Presentation of outcomes from the participative theatre | Debate | 15:00-16:00 | All groups give an opinion of what would be the results of the use of such approach in their work. |

⁴⁴ All the content has been translated from Portuguese to English.

APPENDIX 2: STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT AND DOCUMENTATION SEMINAR TO STAFF MEMBERS

Definition, writing and documenting an intervention project

| Item | Content | Methodology | Time | Observation |
|--|---|--|---------------|---|
| Day 1: 15/06/2009 | | | | |
| Introduction | What is an intervention project? | Dialogue Presentation and discussion | 9:00-10:00 | Each participant gives an opinion about what s/he thinks should be a social intervention project. Collective discussion on these opinions. |
| Street work: How to write a project proposal? | Stage 1- Understanding the context and achieving local acceptance | Powerpoint presentation | 10:00-12:00 | Stages of intervention project design with street children |
| Day 2: 16/06/2009 | | | | |
| Street work: How to write a project proposal? | Stage 2 and 3- Problem identification and priorities | Powerpoint presentation | 9:00-10:00 | Discussion on the criteria for identification of social problems and priorities through participative interaction. |
| Street work: How to write a project proposal? | Stage 4 and 5: Planing and budgeting and intervention project. | Powerpoint presentation | 10:00-12:00 | Discussion of 2 samples of budgeting and planning formats for social development projects |
| Day 3: 17/06/2009 | | | | |
| Street work: How to write a project proposal? | Stage 5 and 6: Implementing social intervention project with street children | Powerpoint presentation | 9:00-10:00 | Group discussion of interaction strategies during the implementation of the project. Risks and challenges of such activies. |
| Documenting and reporting the intervention project | Verification sources, receipts, photos, videos, field work note books, drawings, maps, letters, e-mails, etc. | Powerpoint presentation | 10:00-12:00 | Discussion on the different verification sources, their importance. Reflection on how to make the report better, and what to report in an intervention project. |
| Day 4: 18/06/2009 | | | | |
| Documenting and reporting the intervention project | Relationship between project budget and project report (the use of verification sources in the report) How to organize the verification sources | Powerpoint presentation and group discussion | 9:00-10:00 | Reflection on how to make the report better, and what to report in an intervention project. |
| Documenting and reporting the intervention project | The structure of a final report. Closing the seminar | Powerpoint presentation and group discussion Celebration | 10:00 – 12:00 | Discussion on the general structure of a report (sampled) Celebration of the seminar. |

APPENDIX 3 : HOW IS THE GROUP'S PARTICIPATION?

| Date | Questions | Answers/opinions | Observations |
|------|--|------------------|--------------|
| | How is the reception today? | | |
| | How is the collective and individual mood today? | | |
| | Who is asking questions and or giving answers to collective interests? | | |
| | What are the group's interests today? | | |
| | What kind of games, topics or ideas they give during the meeting? | | |
| | What else did we do? | | |